

2009 RECRUITING EDITION

THE ORIGINAL MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA ATHLETICS

HUSKERS

ILLUSTRATED

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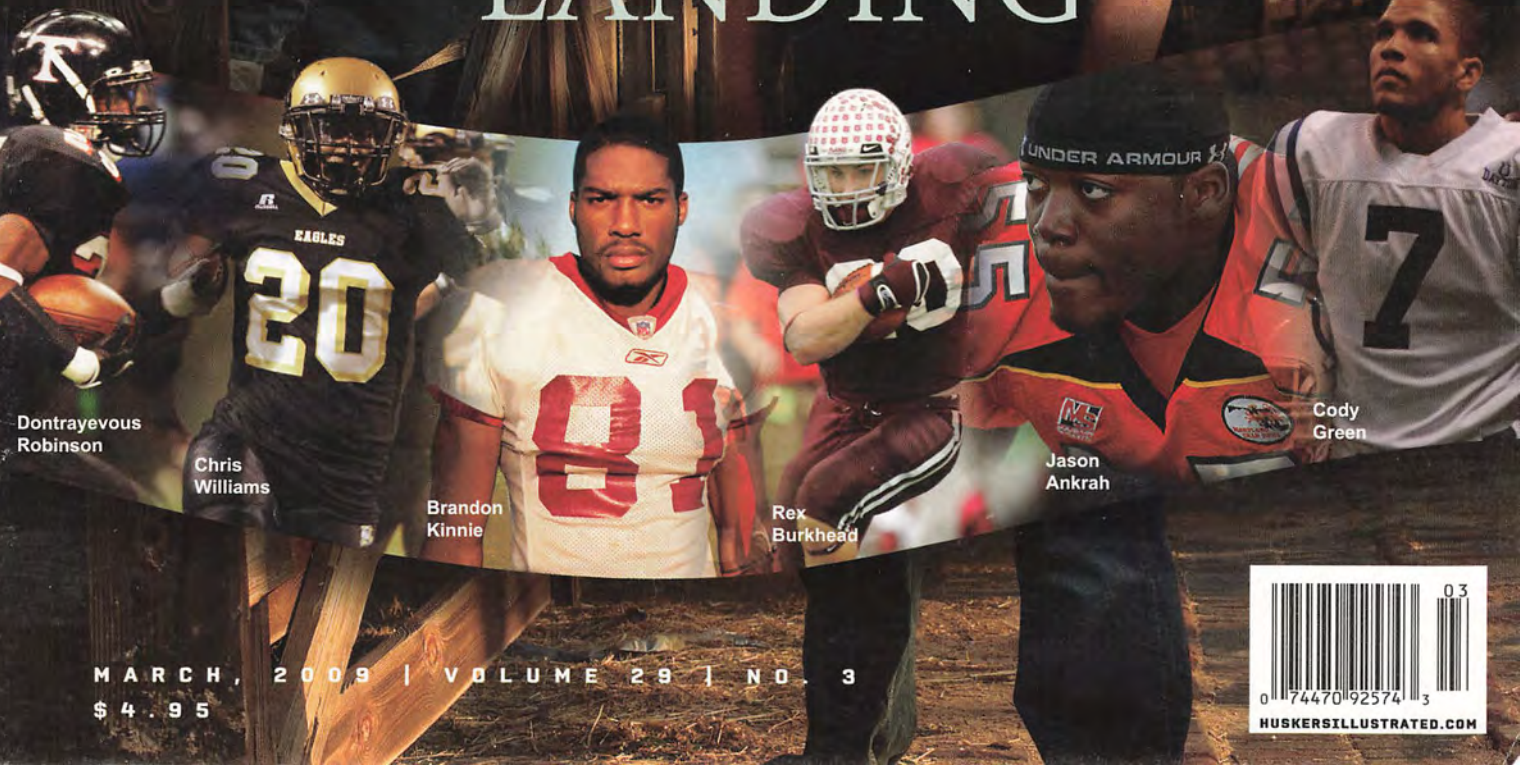
Jesse Coffey

NEBRASKA
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Nick Ash

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LONE★STAR LANDING



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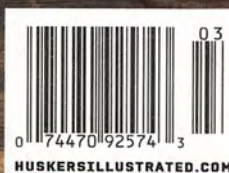
Brandon
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Cody
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MARCH, 2009 | VOLUME 29 | NO. 3
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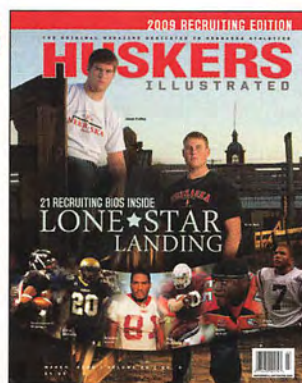
HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

ON THE COVER

Texas natives **Jesse Coffey** and **Nick Ashe** highlight the 2009 Huskers Illustrated Recruiting Edition. Nebraska signed eight players from the Lone Star State in February.

Also pictured (left to right) are **Dontrayevious Robinson** (photo credit John F. Rhodes, *Dallas*

Morning News), **Chris Williams** (Abilene News Reporter), **Brandon Kinnie** (Rivals.com), **Rex Burkhead** (Erich Schlegel, *Dallas Morning News*), **Jason Ankrah** (Rivals.com) and **Cody Green** (John Talman, *HuskersIllustrated.com*). Cover photo by Tom Fox.



NEXT ISSUE

The April issue (Volume 29, Issue 4) will be mailed on Monday, March 16. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

REVEL IN RECRUITING

Huskies Illustrated readers among the most passionate when it comes to recruiting



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WE ARE PLEASED to present our 2009 Huskers Illustrated Recruiting Edition and are excited about how much information we have packed into this year's issue. Our staff has worked tirelessly over the last several weeks to compile everything you would want to know about this year's class.

We know how important recruiting is to our readers and we always want to explore new ways to expand our coverage. As Mike Babcock points in the "Final Word," it's that passion Husker fans show for recruiting that can make a difference in landing a recruit.

Two members of this year's recruiting class, Eric Martin and Chris Williams, both went out of their way to talk about how Husker fans recognized and welcomed them during their official visits this fall. That's why this issue is so much fun to publish – because those people that make an impression on those recruits are our readers – of both the magazine and HuskersIllustrated.com.

Our cover "Lone Star Landing," features six of Nebraska's eight Texans in this year's class. It only seemed appropriate after Bo Pelini and his staff raided the state of such outstanding talent.

Inside this issue we have made a change we hope you enjoy. We have replaced "The Big 12 Beat" with "State of the Huskers" – a popular column in the past. Veteran writer Curt McKeever of the Lincoln Journal Star

transitions to this new assignment, giving Huskers Illustrated even more coverage dedicated specifically to the Big Red.

Of course, as with every annual recruiting edition, we have the most in-depth coverage on this year's class that you will find. We have bios and quotes on all 21 signees, giving our readers the scoop on the entire recruiting class.

Make sure you don't miss Steve Sipple's column on Nebraska's latest second-generation Cornhusker, Lincolnite Cole Pensick, who will be joining Nebraska in the fall.

While we will of course be covering the remainder of basketball season, spring football, the NFL draft and baseball season, we are already thinking about the 2009 football season.

We are entrenched in work on this year's annual football yearbook, which will also celebrate 500 issues of Huskers Illustrated. We'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions for what should be a very special project.

Thanks for continuing to support Huskers Illustrated. Next up – our spring football preview! **N**

Send us your comments or story ideas to huskiesillustrated@gmail.com.

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Big Red Mailbag

SEND US YOUR LETTERS!! Huskers Illustrated loves to hear from its readers. Have an opinion to share about a story in this issue? Send us a letter. Have an opinion about the Huskers? Drop us a line. Want to share a photo from your last Husker game? We'll take it. **IF WE PRINT YOUR LETTER, WE'LL SEND YOU A SPECIAL HUSKER GIFT!** Send digital photos and letters to huskersillustrated@gmail.com and your regular snapshots and letters to HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED, 7755 S. 23rd St., Lincoln, NE 68512. Letters may be edited for length and grammar.



FIRST SEASON CONGRATS

Mr. Babcock,

Your first season as editor of a magazine that I have enjoyed 1987 has been great!

I have enjoyed "Hometown Heroes," "Catching Up With," and "Games Remembered," so much.

The coverage of sports like women's volleyball, cross country, women's swimming, wrestling, bowling and both men's and women's basketball is SUPER! I also like looking at those old pictures from long ago. Enclosed is my subscription renewal.

GEORGE ROSNER

Schenectady, NY

RECRUITING CLASS

The Nebraska coaching staff should be commended on what appears to be an excellent recruiting class.

This came together without too many surprises in terms of losing kids and I believe that will only get better as our coaches bring stability back to the program.

I've been telling people for years that we needed to spend more time recruiting kids from Texas and California. I'm glad somebody finally listened to me (haha)! My favorite part about this class is that it appears to address our needs at certain positions, but also with kids that will play Bo's style of ball.

Go Big Red!

EDWARD JONES

Chicago, Ill. (via email)

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT NEBRASKA'S CLASS:

SEAN CALLAHAN, HUSKERSILLUSTRATED.COM

I think the most important thing you have to look at when you break down this recruiting class is where it ranks within the Big 12 North. For Nebraska football to get back to where they want to be, they have to start consistently winning the North again and I feel like **BO PELINI**'s 2009 signing class will put the Huskers in a position to do that in the near future. NU had the top class in the North, and you really have to be impressed with what Pelini's staff did in states like Texas and California.

When you look at this class it does exactly what it's supposed to do, and that's fill several different needs at key positions. You really have to like what they did on offense by landing a big time quarterback in **CODY GREEN** and a home run threat at running back like **REX BURKHEAD**.

I also like the offensive line class the Huskers signed. It was important that NU signed some quality players that could add some immediate depth for the future. I think **NICK ASH**, **JESSE COFFEY**, **BRENT QVALE** and **JEREMIAH SIRLES** all have the type of frames you want to see in a lineman and they should be perfect fits for Nebraska's offensive system.

Defensively, I think anybody on the staff will tell you they came up short on the defensive line by one or two guys, but the Huskers hit potential home runs at linebacker and in the secondary. Linebacker **CHRIS WILLIAMS** may have the most impressive film in the class and he should be an impact player once he recovers from his knee surgery. At corner, **ANDREW GREEN** is one of the top defensive backs in all of Texas and the fact that Oklahoma came after him late proves that.

As for sleepers of the class, I'll go with Qvale

on the offense and **THADDEUS RANDLE** on the defense. Qvale is probably the best recruit to come out of North Dakota in the last several years and Randle blew up as a senior and was named first team all-state in Texas's highest classification.

As I look ahead to next year, don't expect a big class numbers wise, as NU will probably only have room for 16 to 18 prospects. Defensive tackle is probably the biggest position of need for the class of 2010.

JOHN TALMAN, HUSKERSILLUSTRATED.COM

When you look at a recruiting class, the best way to rank it in my mind is how many needs were filled. With the exception of interior defensive tackle, I think most of their needs were filled and many of those spots with highly recruited prospects. There is some rare talent in this class with the likes of **CHRIS WILLIAMS**, **JASON ANKRAH**, and **REX BURKHEAD** among many others. What makes them even more special is not their football talents, but their versatility to fill a number of different needs in several areas. Combine that with a solid offensive line class, a very underrated defensive back class, and a top ranked quarterback, and it's hard not to like the potential here if you're a Nebraska fan.

Also, you saw a continued emphasis on the state of Texas in this class, especially the Dallas-Fort Worth area, which in my opinion is the key for any Big 12 school. If you don't pick up these players and you're in the conference, you'll end up playing against them. Nebraska has once again showed that they know the state, along with California and the surrounding region from Lincoln, is a big time priority. That's important not just for '09 but going forward in future classes.

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TOM KROPP



UNDER PRESSURE

Now in his 19th season as coach of the Nebraska-Kearney men's basketball team, **TOM KROPP** knows a thing or two about the full-court press.

However, the Nebraska sports legend — Kropp was ranked among the top 10 athletes in the history of the state by the *Omaha World-Herald* in 2005 — probably never felt as much pressure on the hardwood as he did when he was an 18-year-old freshman-to-be being recruited by the University of Nebraska.

It was late summer in 1971 and Kropp, a four-sport high school standout from Aurora, Neb., had signed a letter of intent with Nebraska and moved into his dorm room the weekend before classes started. Freshmen weren't eligible to compete at the varsity level at the time, so the plan was for Kropp to go through a season with both the Cornhusker

football and basketball teams before making a decision which sport to focus on.

On the Sunday afternoon before he was to start classes at Nebraska, however, Kropp had a change of heart. Suddenly, he realized that NAIA Kearney State College — now NCAA Division II Nebraska-Kearney — was where he wanted to be.

Now, there was just the little matter of filling in Cornhusker football coach **BOB DEVANEY** and basketball coach **JOE CIPRIANO** on his plans.

"I just called them and said I had made up my mind, and my dad was going to be there in an hour to pick me up," Kropp said. "Within 25 minutes, **BOB DEVANEY, TOM OSBORNE, MONTE KIFFIN, JOE CIPRIANO** and **MOE IBA** were in my room.

"So at that point, I was like, 'Whoa.'"

When you're 18 years old, you're feeling more pressure than there actually is. That was the toughest decision I've ever had to make in my life."

The decision was made even more difficult by the fact that Nebraska's football program was coming off a national championship season in 1970. Kropp said he sensed pressure from some friends and family to play for the home-state Huskers.

"I obviously had a lot more people who wanted me to go to Nebraska than Kearney State College," Kropp said. "Aurora is only 70 miles from Lincoln, and Nebraska football was a big deal there, so there were a lot of disappointed people in my hometown that weren't very fond of me at that point."

Ultimately, Kropp said his decision boiled down to wanting to be near his brother and

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JOE GANZ



HUSKER SEASON AWARDS

Announced at the annual team banquet in mid-December:

Team MVP – Joe Ganz, QB, **Offensive MVP** – Nate Swift, WR, **Defensive MVP** – Ndamukong Suh, NT, **Special Teams MVP** – Alex Henery, PK, **Walk-on MVP** – Henery, **Scout Team Offensive MVP** – Derek Meyer, OL; Tim Marlowe, WR, **Scout Team Defensive MVP** – Alonzo Whaley, LB; Courtney Osbourne, DB, **Tom Novak Trophy** – Ganz, **Guy Chamberlin Trophy** – Swift, **Cletus Fischer Native Son Award** – Todd Peterson, WR, **Bobby Reynolds Award** – Ganz, **Lifters of the Year** – Suh; Matt Slauson, OG,

two sisters, who all were in Kearney. Plus, he had narrowed his college choices to Nebraska and Kearney State based solely on the fact that both schools were 70 miles from his home.

"Different kids use different things to make decisions," Kropp said. "My No. 1 factor was location."

Kropp's decision to play for an NAIA school certainly didn't hamper his athletic career. After an All-America career with the Lopers, he was drafted by the NBA's Washington Bullets, the ABA's Denver Nuggets and the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers. He spent two years in the NBA with the Bullets and the Chicago Bulls before finishing his professional basketball career in Belgium from 1979-83.

While still classifying himself as a Cornhuskers fan, Kropp said he never regretted not coming to Nebraska. "Whenever I made a decision, I never ever looked back and second-guessed myself about whether it would've worked out great or not," he said.



PRESTIGE POINTS

Nebraska was fifth in ESPN's recently released Prestige Rankings of the best major college football programs since 1936, the first season for the Associated Press poll. The rankings were determined by a computer program and included all 119 Football Bowl Subdivision teams in 2008.

The rankings can be accessed on ESPN.com.

The top 15, with point totals: Oklahoma (1,968), USC (1,867), Ohio State (1,655), Notre Dame (1,579), Nebraska (1,553), Alabama (1,534), Texas (1,494), Michigan (1,332), Florida State (1,110), Miami (1,109), Penn State (1,088), Tennessee (1,072), LSU (926), Georgia (888) and Florida (834).

SIDELINES



POST-SEASON PLAY

Former Cornhusker running back **MARLON LUCKY** was named the offensive MVP after rushing for 68 yards and a touchdown on seven carries in the East-West Shrine game at Houston in mid-January. Lucky, an alternate, was added to the victorious East team after Purdue's Kory Sheets withdrew from the game. Lucky was third on the depth chart going into the game.

Former Cornhuskers **MATT SLAUSON** and **T.J. O'LEARY** also were on the East team.

Three other former Cornhuskers were selected for the Texas versus The Nation all-star game at El Paso at the end of January: **LYDON MURTHA**, **ZACH POTTER** and **CODY GLENN**.

In addition, former Cornhusker center **KELLY SAALFELD** (1977-79), a Big 12 official, was the head linesman for the Senior Bowl game at Mobile, Ala., in late January.

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COME BACK, SUH

The mid-January announcement wasn't a surprise, or at least it shouldn't have been. **NDAMUKONG SUH** said he planned to return for his senior season. And he didn't waver.

After the Gator Bowl game, he said he was 99 percent certain he'd be back. Plans can change, however, and that was before the junior defensive tackle met with an NFL advisory committee to get a sense of where he might be selected in the draft come April.

Perhaps early in the second round, or even late in the first round he was told. So he was looking at the possibility of earning big money next football season. But as he had maintained, he was going to stay. "School was a huge deal for me and my family," he said at a news conference to make the decision official. "I definitely want to graduate from the University of Nebraska."

"And I also think although the seniors had a great start, of pushing this program

in the right way, I think I can help and push it even more in the right direction this next, upcoming season."

Suh discussed the matter with coach **BO PELINI**, of course. Pelini didn't try to persuade him to stay. "I never have, never will, tell a guy, 'You should come back,'" said Pelini. "I said, 'You have to do what's best for you and your family . . . It's on you. I'm going to support you either way.'"

"But I think at the end of the day, the most important thing I said to him is, 'If you're coming back, you need to come back for the right reasons.' And the right reasons are not NFL-oriented. The right reasons are to get his degree, to play tremendous football to help this program in the future, and it's about team, it's about Nebraska, what we have going on here."

Suh "was totally on the same page as I was," Pelini said.

SIDELINES



PREPPING FOR THE DRAFT

Six former Cornhuskers have been invited to participate in the NFL Combine in Indianapolis Feb. 20-26: offensive linemen **LYDON MURTHA** and **MATT SLAUSON**, running back **MARLON LUCKY**, wide receiver **NATE SWIFT**, defensive end **ZACH POTTER** and linebacker **CODY GLENN**. Slason, Murtha and Swift were invited just before the deadline. All but Lucky are preparing for the Combine with Cornhusker strength and conditioning coach **JAMES DOBSON**. Lucky is training in Carlsbad, Calif.

Former Cornhuskers who aspire to a shot at the NFL but weren't invited to the Combine are preparing for Nebraska's pro-testing day in mid-March. Among those is quarterback **JOE GANZ**, who told the *Lincoln Journal Star*: "Hopefully, there's a team or two willing to take a chance on me."

His height is a consideration, Ganz told the newspaper. "It's just kind of hard being 6-1, especially when all they care about is how big you are and how far you can throw it," he said.

What do you think of the 2009 Recruiting Edition? Email us your thoughts at huskersillustrated@gmail.com



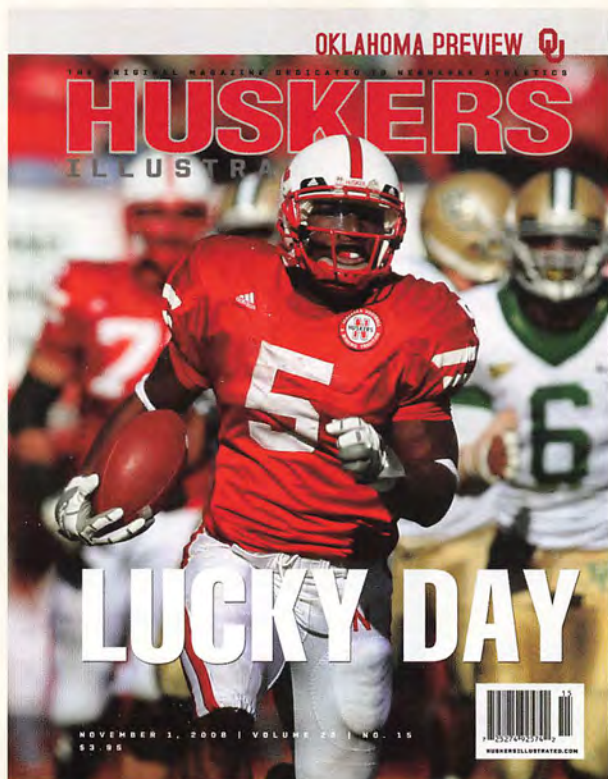
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HOMETOWN HEROES



Robert Taylor - York, NE



February is Black History Month, and though few York residents might realize it, one of the earliest black football players at Nebraska came from their community – **ROBERT TAYLOR**.

GEORGE FLIPPIN was the first, of course. He was among the first at any predominately white university, in fact. Flippin played for the second team Nebraska ever fielded in 1891. Though he was born in Ohio, the son of a freed slave, Dr. Charles Flippin, the family lived in York County for a time before moving to Lincoln, where George attended high school.

Flippin was followed at Nebraska by **WILLIAM M. JOHNSON**, who earned the first of four football letters in 1900, according to athletic department records, and the final three in 1904, 1905 and 1906. He and Taylor were Cornhusker teammates in 1905 and 1906.

Taylor played guard and weighed 208 pounds, according to the *Daily Nebraskan*, which reported in November of 1905, when he was a freshman: "'Bob' is the giant player from the York High School, and his fierce line plunges and tackling has made him one of the most promising candidates for the eleven that has entered Nebraska in some years."

In a recap of the 1906 season in the student yearbook, written by Johnson, Taylor was described as one of the team's two "pre-eminent" linemen. "Taylor's weight and the ease with which he handles himself" earned him a position as a freshman.

Though he played on the line, he carried the ball, too.

However, Johnson (a 153-pound end) wrote of Taylor, "The changes in the rules in some respects lessened the value of his weight on offense (in 1906). And Nebraska coaches worked out no scheme by which they could use this ponderous guard."

Taylor, a "Medic" according to the *Daily Nebraskan*, wasn't on the team in 1907, when "King" Cole replaced **AMOS FOSTER** as head coach after only one season. **N**

ROBERT TAYLOR

208 pounds

Guard

Lettered in 1905

Hometown: York

County: York (county seat)

Population: 8,081 (2000)

Distance from Lincoln: 48 miles

Nebraska football lettermen:

Kim Baker, LB (1979-80)

Winton Buckley, HB (1944)

Aaron Golliday, TE (1999-02)

Corey Hedrick, LB (1990)

Ed Kositsky, T (1915-17)

Edward E. Lanphere, E (1918)

William Moomey, HB (1946-47)

Bruce Moore, DL (1991-93)

James Myers, FB (1946-47)

Clarence Nelson, HB (1930-31)

Don Rhoda, T (1955-57)

Leon Sprague, E (1925-27)

Robert S. Taylor, G (1905-06)

SIDELINES



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STATE OF THE HUSKERS

BY CURT MCKEEVER

"Good" not an option for Anderson

THE QUESTION IS RAISED every year right about the time Punxsutawney Phil is deciding whether we'll have six more weeks of winter.

"How's the Nebraska baseball team going to be this season?"

It's probably fair to ask, too, since it seems the Huskers always get dinged pretty good with underclassmen pitchers or recruits being lured away by the Major League Draft. Two years ago, NU lost seven out of a possible eight. Last summer, it was six of eight.

Nebraska also is usually replacing a pretty good crop of seniors.

But when considering what's taken place during the last 10 seasons, that question pretty much answers itself. In other words, if Mike Anderson offers that he expects this year's group to be capable enough to be a real factor in the Big 12 Conference race, it won't be cause for banner headlines.

Nine NCAA regional appearances, four trips to the supers and three to the ultimate pinnacle, the College World Series, are all Nebraska need point to in regard to the strength of its program.

Undoubtedly, coaches around the league trying to recruit the same players as the Huskers will always be quick to note how NU is the Big 12's northernmost school. Well, unless the conference adds Minnesota, there's nothing Mike Anderson can do about such talk. The one thing he does have in his back pocket to overcome that fact is that Nebraska's home ballpark is second to none in the league.

And, other than Texas' legendary Augie Garrido, the Huskers, under Anderson, have the best track record in the Big 12.

In his six seasons, Nebraska has a pair of championships, two third-place finishes and one fourth. Texas is the only other team in the

league with that many top-four finishes. Over the same time, the Longhorns have three titles and also fell outside the top four only once (finishing fifth last season).

No wonder Anderson seems so comfortable dealing with the annual preseason questions about his teams.

"We're going to take this team to the highest level we possibly can take it," he said just before the start of the first full-squad practice on Feb. 2. "But I think when (people are) asking that question, they're also asking about the program. Every time somebody asks me, I answer it to the team, but in the background I'm always saying 'Let's go get some gorillas. Let's keep growing. Let's keep getting better. Let's find the top recruit. Let's go, go, go.'"

"Do you just follow the mode 'Well, you're going to be good and we'll see what happens?' I don't want to get to the point where we just see what happens with the team, because I think when you do that we're not challenging ourselves. Right now, we shouldn't just be seeing what's going to happen, we should be recruiting a guy to go make it happen. Big difference."

Nebraska again enters this season with modest expectations - at least in the eyes of so-called experts. The Huskers weren't among the five Big 12 clubs ranked in preseason polls, which means they're not likely to project very highly when the league's coaches make their guesses.

Those guys might, however, want to take the example from the 2007 Major League Draft when evaluating Anderson's current bunch. Even after losing seven of its eight underclassmen or recruits to the draft, NU finished third in last year's race (three spots higher than the coaches predicted) and

advanced to the NCAA Tournament as one of 16 No. 1 seeds.

It's that get-it-done mentality that leads the Huskers to feel like they'll be in the mix at the top once again. Yes, even with 15 newcomers on the roster.

"You look around and you're like 'We're so young, what are we going to do?'" junior outfielder DJ Belfonte recalled thinking early last fall. "But you understand after your first year that everybody's here for a reason and they play the game the right way and play it well. You let the coaches figure out who they're going to bring in, what kind of players are going to fill the void, but you know any guy that comes to Nebraska to play baseball is a real player."

"Last year was a prime example. People saw Johnny Dorn and (then it was) 'Who else do they have?' The expectations weren't high. But we have players. Guys might have to sit the bench a year until they shine, but those guys can play."

Nebraska is replacing lineup regulars - including first-team, all-league players in catcher Mitch Abeita and second baseman Jake Opitz - who produced four of the five highest batting averages on a 2008 club that finished with the lowest team average since 1994.

On the mound, sophomore Mike Neseth and Bird are the only two returning pitchers from last season who threw more than 18 innings. Eleven members of the new staff haven't made their first appearance for the Huskers.

Yes, the Huskers have plenty of questions to answer. Just be careful to interpret that to mean they're bound for a rebuilding year. Anderson is beyond that kind of thinking.

"We're trying to win championships," he said. "We don't want to just be good." **N**



Ade Dagunduro

6-5, 200, Senior, Guard, Inglewood, Calif.

How does a 6-foot-5 guard pull down a career-high nine rebounds against a big, physical Texas team? "Will and grit," said Ade Dagunduro, who also scored a team-high 17 points in the 58-55 upset of the No. 17-ranked Longhorns at the Devaney Sports Center in early February.

Dagunduro, who followed his football player brother Ola (2005-06) to Nebraska, has been a consistent scorer and rebounder for coach Doc Sadler again this season. His game is attacking the basket. He and fellow senior Steve Harley have been the only Cornhuskers to start every game.

HI: Kobe Bryant, Dwyane Wade or Chris Paul?

DAGUNDURO: Paul Pierce, I'm from Inglewood, Calif., born and raised, so I'll take Paul Pierce any day.

HI: If you could excel at another sport at the collegiate level, what sport would it be?

DAGUNDURO: It would definitely be football and also soccer. I'm a pretty good soccer player. That's actually my favorite sport. My father is from Nigeria, so that's where I get that. I think I would excel at football – I was a quarterback and free safety (in high school) – and soccer. I just might pick soccer.

HI: When you cook for yourself, what's your specialty?

DAGUNDURO: Rice . . . my mom would be mad at me that I can't cook the way she can. But I can't cook for the life of me. So it's just rice and eggs. I don't know how much cooking that is, but that's about what I can do.

HI: What's the best movie you've seen lately?

DAGUNDURO: It's not a new movie, but for some reason I can't get enough of Oceans 11. It's weird because I'll watch it every night. I've got it on DVD. I have absolutely no idea why I can't get enough of Oceans 11. It's a fun movie.

HI: What kind of music do you have on your iPod?

DAGUNDURO: A lot of neo soul music, it's kind of like new soul, kind of calm music, a lot of R&B stuff, lets you just mellow out. We've got Raheem DeVaughn, Donell Jones, Floetry . . . we've got a few of them out there.

HI: Who's the funniest guy on the team?

DAGUNDURO: Man, we've got characters on this team. But I'm going to go with either Ryan Anderson or Sek Henry. Those guys . . . no matter what situation you might be in, they're going to find a way to make you laugh.

HI: What was the toughest adjustment for you living in Lincoln after growing up in southern California?

DAGUNDURO: No question, the weather. My older brother obviously went here and he told me, "Man, brace yourself for this weather." I was like, "Yeh, yeh," and kind of pushed it aside. "I'm going to be ready." But once I got out here, it hit me with a storm. I still haven't got adjusted to it.

HI: What's the toughest place in the Big 12 to play?

DAGUNDURO: A lot of people think it may be Allen Fieldhouse or down in Stillwater, but I think it's Colorado for some reason. There's kind of a different mood there you can get caught up in, just being lethargic. It can sneak up on you. The altitude is definitely a factor. Doc likes to say it's a mental thing, but I don't believe in that. When I need a sub with 30 seconds coming off the clock, I know it's something more than just a mental thing.

HI: What's the best thing served at the training table?

DAGUNDURO: Probably the Monday night steaks. They're real tender. I like to get them well done with some A-1 Sauce and I'm good to go. Gotta have A-1. I don't like too much red in my meat. That's not for me.

HI: Did you ask for a No. 11 jersey?

DAGUNDURO: Yes, I wore it in high school. There's nothing major behind it. I call it the "blessed 11." I say that it's blessed, not in a spiritual way, just blessed to produce out there in my respective sport. So I call it the "blessed 11," and I'm sticking with it. I just happened to get it my freshman year (in high school) in football, and I stuck with it ever since.



Chad Wade

Wade carries on family tradition

Chad Wade says he was an average athlete at Weeping Water High School. But he always wanted to be better than average.

Thanks in part to an uncle who was a professional strength trainer, Wade learned that athletes can indeed make major strides through hard and smart work in the weight room and elsewhere.

"I started to see results, and eventually decided it was something I wanted to do as a living," said Wade, 35, an assistant strength coach for the Nebraska football team, who began his association with the Husker athletic performance team in 1996.

His uncle, Gary Wade, worked under former Nebraska strength coach Boyd Epley in the 1970s. Gary Wade eventually moved on to Clemson. Chad and Gary

and other family members spent time together the night before Nebraska's victory over Clemson in this past season's Gator Bowl.

"It's pretty ironic we ended up playing Clemson," said Chad Wade, who received a bachelor's degree in sports management with a minor in psychology from Nebraska Wesleyan in 1996. He played football for the Plainsmen from 1992-94.

He started working at Nebraska in 1996 as a volunteer strength coach. After spending the 1996 and 1997 seasons as a graduate assistant strength coach with the Husker football team, Wade began duties as a full-time strength coach at the Devaney Sports Center. He stayed at the Devaney Center for five years before returning to the



football team on a full-time basis.

Wade now helps Nebraska head football strength coach James Dobson coordinate workouts.

"I'd say we try to develop the total athlete – every aspect of what a football player's going to do," Wade said. "We're talking about strength, power, flexibility, mobility, toughness. We're just trying to create the same culture in the weight room that Coach (Bo) Pelini's trying to create."

Wade is married to the former Amber Burgess, who lettered for the Nebraska softball team from 2000 to 2003. They have a 4-month-old son, Burgess.

Catching up with BY MIKE BABCOCK

Rod Horn

"Too Strong" not too big for kids

To understand Rod Horn's character requires a non-football story. A reporter brought his 6-year-old son to football practice one afternoon, and as the players left the field afterward, Horn stopped to shake the youngster's hand.

The wide-eyed youngster was so impressed by the 6-foot-5, 255-pound defensive tackle that, at school the next day, he drew a picture with Crayons of a football player in a red, No. 55 jersey, dwarfing a tree beside which he stood. The picture was delivered to Horn, to hang in his locker.

A couple of months later, Horn was an unannounced visitor at the youngster's 7th birthday party, where he served as a jungle gym, with children climbing on him and

hanging from his biceps. His nickname, according to the Nebraska media guide, was "Too Strong." He was a dedicated lifter, had been since high school in Fresno, Calif., and held team records in the power clean, bench press and squat. Adults at the party were in awe, as well as impressed that he would take the time.

Horn started for three seasons, though he was sidelined by a knee injury as a sophomore. He earned first-team All-Big Eight recognition twice and All-America honorable mention as a senior. He also was an Academic All-American, with a natural resources major. In fact, he was so focused on a career in resource management that he walked away from an NFL career after two

TOM BANDERAS

LETTERS: 1977-79

POSITION: Defensive tackle

CURRENT: General Manager, South Platte Natural Resources District, Sidney, Neb.

WIFE: Deb

CHILDREN: Austin (19), Katie (16)

seasons. A third-round draft pick, he was a starter his second season with the Cincinnati Bengals, who won the AFC championship before losing to the San Francisco 49ers, 26-21, in Super Bowl XVI. His goal had been to play in a Super Bowl, plus "my competitive flame was not burning as bright, and I was ready to move on with my life," he said.

On Charlie McBride: "He was a player's coach. He was, (and) is, an exceptional individual, coach, mentor and true friend. He was very influential to me, and I think I am safe in saying to many others."

STAYING HOME

BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

Dan Pensick played football at Nebraska. Naturally, he's excited that his son, Cole, will also play football for the Huskers. The Lincoln Northeast standout, who was committed to Nebraska for more than a year, signed his letter of intent on Feb. 4.

Dad's excitement goes beyond the obvious following-in-the-footsteps storyline, though. Dan Pensick is thrilled that his son, a defensive tackle, will have an opportunity to play with and learn from standout nose tackle Ndamukong Suh, who bypassed the NFL draft to return for his senior season.

"For my kid to get an opportunity to spend a season with him, that's a gift," said Dan Pensick, who lettered from 1977-79. "From what I've seen in Suh, he's the kind of guy willing to help the younger kids. He looks like that type of guy."

Cole Pensick said he's heard the same accounts of Suh from the Nebraska coaches. They've told him Suh is a "great people-person" and leader, and somebody who likes to teach.

"Carl (Pelini) was saying that Suh finally got a good grasp of everything toward the end (of the season) and was teaching the younger kids," said Cole Pensick, referring to Nebraska's defensive coordinator, who also oversees the defensive line.

No wonder, then, that Pensick shares his father's excitement of the coming fall.

"I'm looking forward to being part of the d-line, because the d-line kind of makes or breaks the defense, really," Cole Pensick said. "If you don't have a good d-line, the offensive line is going to get to the linebackers. And that

doesn't work well for the defense."

He is one of two Nebraskans who signed in February, the other being Omaha Gross fullback C.J. Zimmerer. Pensick was limited somewhat his senior season on defense because of a hyperextended elbow. He finished the year with 38 tackles.

"He finally got healthy the last two or three games," Dan Pensick said. "It was a hard year. The team was having a rough go of it, and it was the one year he played through injury."

The 6-foot-2, 255-pound Pensick played on both sides of the line at Northeast but was recruited to play defense.

"I like defense a little better. Wherever I can play," he said. "On offense, you're still going to knock people around just like defense. You do it in a different way. But if I had to choose, I'd probably play defense."

There, coaches have told him a "wide open" race exists for second- and third-team positions.

"If you can play," Pensick said, "they'll play you."

Pensick is also open to the possibility of redshirting.

"I'd like to play, but a redshirt gives me an opportunity to have another year of learning and getting used to getting my body into the college type, I guess you'd call it," he said. "I think I still need to get bigger, faster and stronger."

That will happen over time. But the one thing Pensick won't likely be is taller. That's not a problem for coach Bo Pelini; it was,

however, an issue with the previous coaching staff, and a reason Pensick thought he might need to look elsewhere as his recruiting process began.

"Cole being 6-1 or 6-2, we were concerned about that," Dan Pensick said of when Bill Callahan was head coach and Kevin Cosgrove was defensive coordinator.

"They didn't make any qualms about it. Every time they came up to Cole, it was, 'Is he going to get taller?' "

Then, of course, the coaching staff changed, and Pensick's recruitment picked up fast. Pelini was hired in December of 2007, and Nebraska offered him in mid-January. Pensick accepted the offer in his first meeting with the new coach.

Pensick also had met with coach Mark Mangino, as Kansas was showing interest.

"I kind of liked Mangino," Pensick said. "But Pelini's the real deal. And that was it."

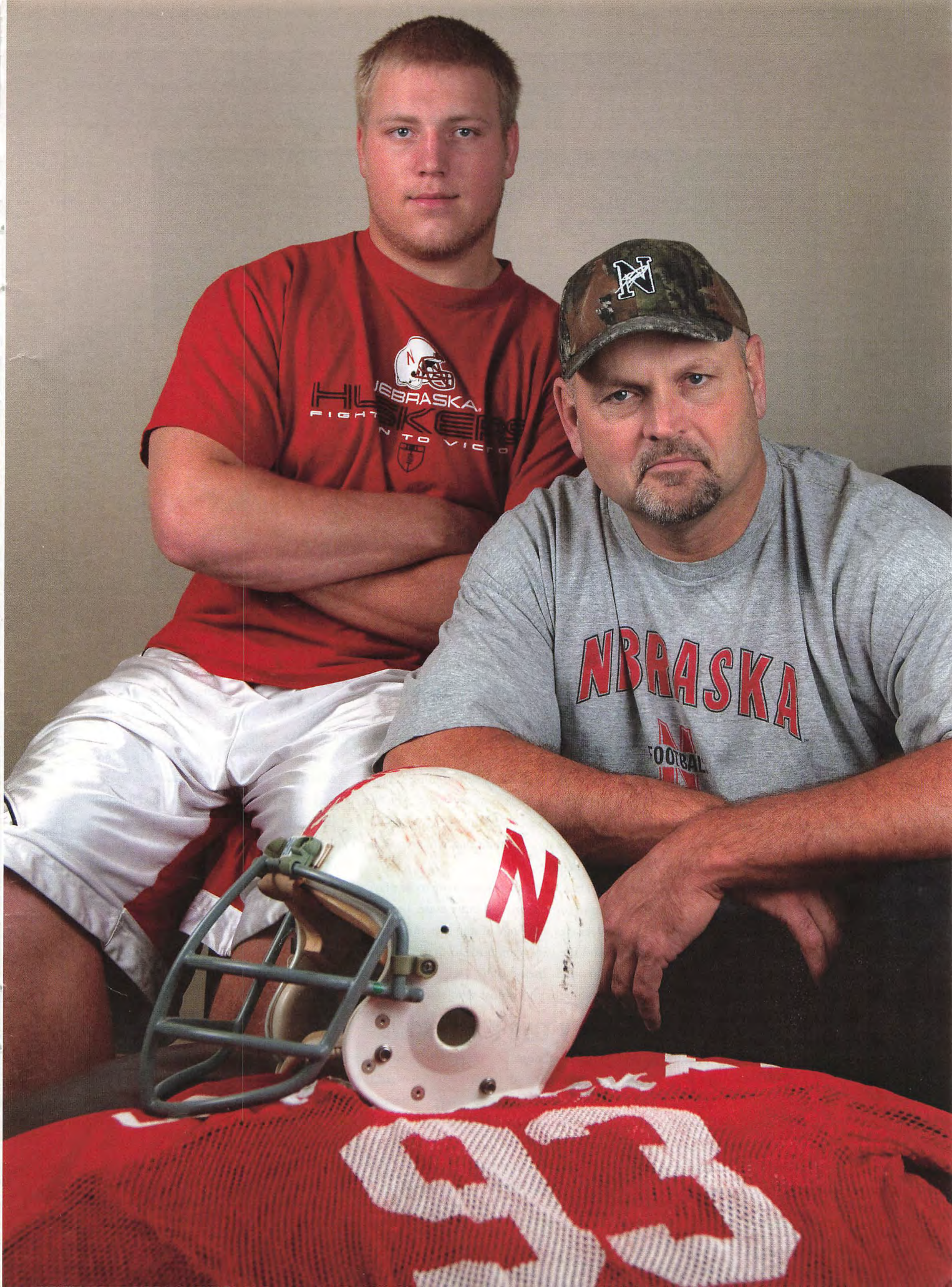
Why?

"I just like Pelini's fiery attitude. He gets after it just like everybody else does. He works just as hard as the players work. There's no laying back from him. And he's not there to take all the glory," said Pensick.

The fact he wasn't 6-5 didn't bother Pelini. The coach referenced Glenn Dorsey, who'd just won the Outland Trophy at LSU, where Pelini was defensive coordinator. Dorsey is 6-1.

"Bo told us, 'We're designing our defense in the middle to have guys who can plug it up and get underneath people's shoulder pads,' " Dan Pensick said. "The interior linemen don't necessarily need to be Ndamukong Suh's size.

PENSICK, CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



Recruiting Roundup



DONTRAYEVOUS ROBINSON

JOHN F. RHODES/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

Texas is a recruiting priority for coach **BO PELINI**, which stands to reason. The state's population is nearly 25 million and high school football is as big as the Lone Star State itself. Eight members of this year's scholarship class are from Texas, including quarterback Cody Green, probably the most publicized.

California also is a recruiting priority, with population density an obvious factor. More than 36 million people live in the Golden State, which means there are a lot of athletes from whom to choose. Six of those the Cornhuskers chose in California signed letters of intent, second only to Texas.

"We believe those are two states that are going to be very important to us, not only this year but in the future," Pelini said on signing day. "We've had good reception there. Those are just a couple of areas that we decided going in we wanted to concentrate on. We thought we had to make some hay in those states, and we were able to get something done this year.

"Hopefully, that's just a sign of things to come."

Nebraska's first concern, practically speaking, is closer to home. But "once you get outside 500 miles surrounding Lincoln, those are the next primary areas. And then we kind of have listed the rest of the country as national . . . you hit that when you can," said Pelini.

The Cornhuskers have taken more players from Texas than any other state, including Nebraska, in each of the last three years. And the two years prior to that, California provided then-coach **BILL CALLAHAN'S** program with its most scholarship recruits.

ONLY TWO HOMEGROWN

Even though **COLE PENSICK** (feature on page 14) and **C.J. ZIMMERER** were the Cornhuskers' only in-state scholarship recruits, Nebraska athletes weren't overlooked.

"We evaluate everybody in the state," Pelini said. "We had some needs to fill.

You talk to the coaches in this state, they would tell you we are recruiting the state of Nebraska."

In addition, 10 of 11 walk-ons listed (those who have been accepted for admittance) on letter-of-intent-signing day are from the state, and "if things work out the way they did this year, there are going to be a number of kids that will be scholarship players down the line," said Pelini.

SPEAKING OF WALK-ONS

Nebraska is taking fewer walk-ons this year than last, of necessity, so "we were a little more selective," Pelini said. "The process was a little bit different."

Though recruiting walk-ons was a "group effort," assistant athletic director for football **JEFF JAMROG**, a former Cornhusker walk-on himself, and assistants **BARNEY COTTON** and **RON BROWN** "really had a significant impact on the walk-on class," said Pelini.

He was asked if convincing athletes to walk on was easier this year.

Recruiting Roundup

RECRUITING BREAKDOWN [POST-TOM OSBORNE]

Numbers reflect players announced on letter-of-intent-signing day, not those who actually enrolled. If a player went to junior college, he is listed according to his home state not the state in which the junior college was located. The state from which the most recruits came in these years was always one of the three listed here.

Year (signees)	Nebraska	Texas	California	Junior College
[Bo Pelini]				
2009 (21)	2	8	6	2
2008 (28)	6	9	3	2
[Bill Callahan]				
2007 (28)	3	7	4	6
2006 (24)	4	1	8	8
2005 (31)	3	3	9	12
2004 (18)	5	1	2	*4
[Frank Solich]				
2003 (18)	5	5	1	3
2002 (18)	7	2	1	1
2001 (18)	5	1	2	1
2000 (21)	6	4	3	1
1999 (22)	7	1	2	1
1998 (20)	9	3	0	0
[*Two added late, after signing day]				

"The proof's in . . . what they saw," he said. "There were a lot of walk-ons that played for us this year, played some significant minutes, and kids just want a chance, the opportunity to play, especially the in-state kids. But we were represented in-state, out-of-state."

TODD PETERSON, TYLER WORTMAN, LANCE THORELL, DREU YOUNG, HUNTER TEAFATILLER, MATT O'HANLON and MATT HOLT as well as specialists **ALEX HENERY, DAN TITCHENER, T.J. O'LEARY** and **JAKE WESCH**, all of whom came to Nebraska as walk-ons, started at least one game this season.

All were in-state athletes except Teafatiller (California), Holt (Missouri) and Titchener (Wyoming).

NUMBERS GAME

Walk-ons are motivated by the opportunity to earn a scholarship. For players currently in the program that determination won't be made until the fall, according to **BO PELINI**.

"I'm not exactly sure what our numbers are going to be. You've got to go through spring and summer before you actually know," he said. "But I believe there are some kids on our football team that are candidates, I mean obviously. We'll just see how that works out."

Among the obvious candidates for a scholarship is place-kicker **ALEX HENERY**.

"It always becomes a numbers game. But like I said, we as a staff feel good about the number we signed this year in the class. I like where our numbers are right now," Pelini said.

Scholarship recruits **SHAWN SULLIVAN** (2007) and **TYSON**

HETZER (2008) are no longer

with the team, according to Pelini. Sullivan was a defensive back from Brenham, Texas. Hetzer, who was hampered by injuries since enrolling a year ago in January, was a tight end from Redding, Calif., by way of Citrus College.



NATE SWIFT

SIDELINES



THURSDAY TANGLE

ESPN recently announced that next fall's Big 12 North Division showdown between Nebraska and Missouri will take place on Thursday, Oct. 8 in Columbia. The Big 12 opener for both schools will be televised nationally by ESPN with kickoff set for 8 p.m. Central Time.

The contest was originally scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 3.

The appearance on ESPN's Thursday night package will mark the first for Nebraska since a 2003 victory at Southern Miss. It will be Nebraska's fifth overall appearance in ESPN Thursday night contests, with the Huskers also picking up wins at Oklahoma State in 1993 and 1995, and at Texas Tech in 1994.

The move of the Missouri game to Thursday night gives Nebraska open Saturdays on Oct. 3 and Oct. 10.

2009 NEBRASKA SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 12	Arkansas State
Sept. 19	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 26	Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 8	at Missouri
Oct. 17	Texas Tech
Oct. 24	Iowa State
Oct. 31	at Baylor
Nov. 7	Oklahoma
Nov. 14	at Kansas
Nov. 21	Kansas State
Nov. 27 or 28	at Colorado

Recruiting Roundup

TO REDSHIRT OR NOT

Only four members of last year's scholarship recruiting class saw action this season: **ALFONZO DENNARD**, **MASON WALD** (see *Fearless Hitter*, page 28), **SEAN FISHER** and **CAMERON MEREDITH**.

And Fisher and Meredith appeared in only one game each. Since both were hampered by injuries, **BO PELINI** is optimistic they'll be granted medical redshirts, meaning they'll still have four seasons of eligibility remaining. "I think it's a no-brainer," he said in mid-January.

As for redshirting nearly the entire class, for all intents and purposes, "it was the right thing for our football team last year," he said on letter-of-intent-signing day.

However, if he had it to do over, he said at a Big Red Breakfast in Omaha in late December, he wouldn't have redshirted "a lot of them. I would have played most of them in some capacity."

REVAMP RECRUITING

Yes, **BO PELINI** and his staff had to deal with misinformation disseminated during the recruiting process by often-anonymous sources on the Internet as well as by other programs. "You're dealing with that all the time," he said. "Sometimes it works in your favor and sometimes it works against you."

"At the end of the day, honesty is the best policy. You've just got to be honest. You've got to communicate well. At the end of the day, you're at the mercy of what they want to do."

Pelini is in favor of changing the rules regarding recruiting. "But I'm not going to be able to change it. I'm just one voice," he said. "I think there are a lot of things they could do to fix it and make it better, but . . . I've thought that for a long time, so it's obviously not changing any time soon."

An early signing date might improve things, for example, but "people didn't think

NO COMMENT FROM BO

As was the case last season, **BO PELINI** declined to comment on individual recruits during his letter-of-intent, signing-day news conference. "It's a team," he said. "I don't want to get into each particular guy. Everyone's going to have their opinions. To me, it's just projections. We evaluated these kids. We think they're good football players, and now they're a part of our team."

"We're going to bring them in. We're going to develop them. Until I see him line up for us and start competing . . . then that's when we'll start talking about them."

Despite not talking about individuals, "I'm proud of them. I'm excited. I'm excited they all decided to come. Now they're Huskers. That's kind of my philosophy," he said.

"That's what they've come into. And that's what they're ready to do."



so because they voted it down," said Pelini. "We just play within the rules that govern our sport. That's all we can do."

Overall, though, "I think the process is lousy," he said.

FULLBACK FUTURE



C.J. ZIMMERER,

listed as a running back, could begin his career at fullback. But "where guys are going to play, we don't know,"

BO PELINI said. "He's a heck of a football player. Really, enough said there. Some of it's position-wise, but we want to take good football players."

"That particular young man can play a number of positions."

Zimmerer also played linebacker in high school.

Nebraska didn't use a true fullback much last season. Even though **THOMAS LAWSON**, a senior walk-on, was listed as the starter, he didn't start a game. The Cornhuskers always opened in offensive alignments that utilized an H-back or an additional wide receiver.

BELL'S BACK, ALREADY

Despite not wanting to discuss individual recruits, Pelini did respond to a question about **ANTONIO BELL**, a wide receiver from Daytona Beach, Fla., who also signed a letter of intent with Nebraska last season but didn't enroll because of academic eligibility considerations.

"He was so close (to qualifying) the last time," **BO PELINI** said. "He kind of had a bad start when he first started high school and then he needed to overcome it. He just missed it (the standard). He decided just to take a couple of more classes and test again,

Recruiting Roundup

EARLY EXITS

There was concern among Nebraska fans that **DAVE RIMINGTON** might leave after his junior season in 1981, that he would declare for the NFL draft. He had been forced to take a medical redshirt because of injury as a freshman and thus had spent four seasons at the university.

On the day after the Cornhuskers lost to Clemson in the Orange Bowl game, a Lincoln newspaper reported, Rimington and coach Tom Osborne had a "heated discussion" in the lobby of a Miami hotel, while busses waited to take the team to a banquet. The subject was the draft. "A frustrated, injury-riddled Rimington was ready to get paid for all his sacrifices," the story said.

The Cornhusker center was a consensus All-American and an Academic All-American. He had earned what would be the first of two Outland Trophies. And he was an overwhelming pick as the Big Eight "Offensive Player of the Year" – unprecedented for a lineman.

As it turned out, discussion of his leaving early was premature. He lacked sufficient credits to complete an undergraduate degree prior to the draft. So there was no decision to be made. And Nebraska wouldn't lose an underclassman to the NFL for another 10 seasons.

CORNHUSKERS WHO LEFT EARLY:

Johnny Mitchell, TE, 1992 – first round, 15 overall, Jets
Derek Brown, RB, 1993 – fourth, 109, Saints
Calvin Jones, RB, 1994 – third, 80, Raiders
Lawrence Phillips, RB, 1996 – first, 6, Rams
Ahman Green, RB, 1998 – third, 76, Seahawks
Dominic Raiola, C, 2001 – second, 50, Lions
Toniú Fonoti, G, 2002 – second, 39, Chargers
Fabian Washington, CB, 2005 – first, 23, Raiders
Josh Bullocks, S, 2005 – second, 40, Saints
Brandon Jackson, RB, 2007 – second, 63, Packers

and became eligible.

"It was the right thing for him. Obviously, if we didn't believe he could do it, we wouldn't have stayed with him. He's a great kid, fought through a lot. He's here and doing well."

Bell is among three members of the 2009 scholarship recruiting class already enrolled in classes. The others are quarterback **CODY GREEN** and defensive back **DEJON GOMES**, a transfer from City College of San Francisco. Gomes has three seasons to complete two of eligibility.

GAINING ACCEPTANCE

The reception for **BO PELINI** and his assistants around the country, as well as in the state, was better this year than a year ago. But it's "not great yet," said Pelini. "It's getting better. I think people are waiting to see. I think it got better as we had momentum. Obviously, Nebraska, the 'N,' carries a lot of weight, but at the end of the day, kids want to win championships.

"The more we win, the better it's going to be. That's on us."

SIDELINES



IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM ALBERT "THUNDER"

THORNTON, a fullback and senior co-captain on **BOB DEVANEY**'s first Nebraska team in 1962, died in mid-December at age 69. Thornton, a first-team All-Big Eight selection as a junior, was hampered by injuries as a senior. "I never lost my respect for him though," Devaney wrote in his 1981 autobiography. "He could run and he'd hit you."

Thornton, who played linebacker on defense, scored two touchdowns in the Cornhuskers' 36-34 victory against Miami in the 1962 Gotham Bowl game.

In addition, he was the first African-American to be tapped for the Innocents Society, the Chancellor's Senior Honorary at the University of Nebraska. Selection to the society, established in 1903, is based on academics, leadership and involvement in the community as well as the university.

Thornton also was a Cornhusker assistant in 1970 and 1971.



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2009 Recruiting Class

2009 Nebraska Football Signees (21)

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (High School/JC)
Jason Ankrah	DE	6-4	250	Gaithersburg, Md. (Quince Orchard HS)
Nick Ash	OL	6-5	260	Keller, Texas (Keller HS)
Antonio Bell*	WR	6-2	180	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland HS)
Rex Burkhead	RB	5-11	200	Plano, Texas (Plano HS)
Jesse Coffey	OL	6-7	290	Denton, Texas (Guyer HS)
Dejon Gomes**	DB	6-0	190	Hayward, Calif. (Logan HS/CC of San Fran.)
Andrew Green	DB	6-0	180	San Antonio, Texas (James Madison HS)
Cody Green*	QB	6-4	220	Dayton, Texas (Dayton HS)
J.T. Kerr	TE	6-4	230	San Diego, Calif. (Scripps Ranch HS)
Brandon Kinnie	WR	6-3	215	Kansas City, Mo. (Grandview HS/Ft. Scott (Kan.) CC)
Eric Martin	LB	6-2	215	Moreno Valley, Calif. (Rancho Verde HS)
Taylor Martinez	ATH	6-1	185	Corona, Calif. (Centennial HS)
Lazarri Middleton	DB	6-1	190	Long Beach, Calif. (Polytechnic HS)
Cole Pensick	DL	6-2	260	Lincoln, Neb. (Lincoln Northeast HS)
Brent Qvale	OL	6-7	335	Williston, N.D. (Williston HS)
Thaddeus Randle	DL	6-1	255	Galena Park, Texas (North Shore HS)
Dontrayevous Robinson	RB	6-1	215	Eules, Texas (Trinity HS)
Jeremiah Sirles	OL	6-6	280	Lakewood, Colo. (Bear Creek HS)
Dijon Washington	DB	6-0	175	Lawndale, Calif. (Leuzinger HS)
Chris Williams	LB	6-0	230	Abilene, Texas (Abilene HS)
C.J. Zimmerer	RB	6-0	215	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha Gross HS)

* - Enrolled at Nebraska in January; **-Indicates mid-year signee;

2009 Walk-On Student Athletes (14)

The following student-athletes have accepted admission to the University of Nebraska and plan to join the Husker football program as walk-ons in the fall.

^ HuskersIllustrated.com has learned the student has accepted a walk-on offer.

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (High School/JC)
Robert Barry	TE	6-8	220	Battle Creek, Neb. (Battle Creek HS)
Brandon Chapek	OL	6-5	320	Wahoo, Neb. (Bishop Neumann HS)
Tyson Clark	WR	6-4	185	Lincoln, Neb. (Lincoln East HS)
Nick Failla	WR	5-10	180	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North HS)
Dwight Jones	OL	6-4	240	Gretna, Neb. (Gretna HS)
Ron Kellogg	QB	6-1	210	Omaha, Neb. (Westside HS)
Ty Kildow	WR	5-7	165	Omaha, Neb. (Millard South HS)
Jake Long	TE	6-4	230	Elkhorn, Neb. (Elkhorn HS)
Spencer Long	DE	6-4	250	Elkhorn, Neb. (Elkhorn HS)
P.J. Mangieri	LS	6-4	245	Peoria, Ill. (Dunlap HS)
^Brodrick Nickens	OL	6-6	280	Alliance, Neb. (Alliance)
Devin Paulsen	LB	6-2	210	Lincoln, Neb. (Lincoln Christian HS)
^Wil Richards	S	5-10	182	Lee's Summit (Mo.) West
^Brett Wells	TE	6-4	200	Saint Paul, Neb.



JASON ANKRAH, DL

Gaithersburg, Md.
(Quince Orchard)

Height: 6-4 • Weight: 247
40-yard dash: 4.79



Bio: Defensive end Jason Ankrah is one of the top prospects on the East Coast and one of the nation's top defensive end recruits. Ankrah comes to Nebraska from Quince Orchard High School in Gaithersburg, Md., where he starred for Coach Dave Mencarini. Ankrah is just the second Husker signee from Maryland since 1990, joining senior defensive lineman David Harvey (La Plata), who signed with Nebraska in 2005. The 6-4, 250-pound Ankrah was a disruptive force from his defensive end position. He totaled 55 tackles as a senior, including 42 unassisted stops, 14 tackles for loss, seven sacks and 19 quarterback hurries. His play helped Quince Orchard to a 10-2 record in 2008 and a trip to the Maryland 4A West Regional Final. Ankrah was a first-team all-state pick, was an All-Met selection by the *Washington Post* and was also named to the All-Gazette (Gaithersburg) first team. Ankrah is listed among the top 10 defensive end prospects in the country by Rivals.com and among the top five recruits in Maryland by that service. He is also listed among the top 250 overall prospects in the country by Rivals. Ankrah is from the same high school as Nebraska assistant coach John Papuchis. Ankrah also visited Michigan and Maryland, and also considered Virginia Tech and Clemson.

Why Jason chose Nebraska: "The people there are cool, the atmosphere is amazing and it's a place I want to be. I also like Coach Pelini. He's known for defenses and how much he cares about his players. He's a religious guy and those things caught my eye."

Quince Orchard Head Coach Dave Mencarini: "When you're heavily recruited like he was by the best schools in the country, there's a lot of factors you kind of got to sort out. Everybody wants you, but you got to find out who wants you and who needs you. They (NU) did not make any secrets that Jason was their top guy of end positions that they recruited."



NICK ASH, OL

Keller, Texas
(Keller HS)

Height: 6-5 • Weight: 260
40-yard dash: 5.3



Bio: Ash is one of four players in the class who are expected to begin their Husker careers on the offensive line. The Keller, Texas, native is also one of eight players in the class from the Lone Star State. Ash was an honorable-mention all-district pick for Coach Kevin Atkinson and Class 5A Keller High School, while also earning second-team all-area honors from the *Dallas Morning News*. He helped his team to a 7-3 record in 2008, and the Indians narrowly missed out on a state playoff appearance and improved by three wins over the 2007 season. Ash helped a Keller offense that averaged nearly 30 points per game and he allowed just one sack on the season. Ash played tackle during his senior season, switching from offensive guard as a junior. Ash is ranked among the top 100 overall players in the state of Texas by Rivals.com and is listed among the top 30 offensive guards in the country. Ash is also ranked among the top 40 Dallas area prospects by the *Dallas Morning News*, and among the top 100 recruits in the state by that newspaper. In addition to his on-field accolades, Ash was also an honorable-mention academic all-state pick by the Texas High School Coaches Association. He selected Nebraska over Kansas, Purdue, Texas Tech, Arizona, Michigan and TCU to name a few, but only visited Nebraska.

Why Nick chose Nebraska: "I really like the fans at Nebraska. You walk through the tunnel and they are screaming at you and welcoming you to Nebraska. Even if the season isn't going as good as the fans would want, there is still going to be 85,000 people in the seats each and every week. On third downs, the entire stadium gets loud and rises to the occasion. I haven't seen that at the same level anywhere else."

Keller Head Coach Kevin Atkinson: "Nick is one of the most athletic big guys I've ever been around."



ANTONIO BELL, WR

Daytona Beach, Fla.
(Mainland HS)

Height: 6-2 Weight: 180
40-yard dash: 4.5



Bio: Antonio Bell joined the Husker program in January after originally signing with Nebraska in February of 2008. Bell was one of three players to join the program at semester, along with defensive back Dejon Gomes and quarterback Cody Green. Bell had a highly productive prep career at Mainland High School in Daytona Beach, Fla. The 6-2, 180-pound Bell was an explosive offensive threat for Mainland High and Coach John Maronto. A four-year starter, Bell caught 45 passes for 776 yards and nine touchdowns as a senior in 2007. That performance earned him first-team all-area honors and second-team class 5A all-state accolades from the Florida Sportswriters Association. Bell earned first-team all-area honors for the Buccaneers as a junior when he caught 42 passes, covering 625 yards and four touchdowns. Bell accounted for 500 receiving yards as a sophomore in 2005, earning him a second-team all-area selection. Bell also competed in the high jump and triple jump for the Mainland track team. Bell comes from the same high school that produced current Husker offensive lineman Cruz Barrett. Bell chose Nebraska over offers from West Virginia, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Why Antonio chose Nebraska (Signing Day 2008): "It was everything – the coaches, the facilities and the people. I was impressed by all of the great fan support."

Mainland Coach John Maronto: "He has great hands, so he's a possession, short-pass guy. But his ability to go deep makes Antonio one of those guys who can do it all."

2009 Recruiting Class



REX BURKHEAD, RB

Plano, Texas
(Plano HS)

Height: 5-10 • Weight: 200
40-yard dash: 4.46



Bio: Among the most highly-decorated players in the 2009 class, Burkhead rushed for over 1,000 yards in each of his final three years at Plano. He helped Plano to a 10-2 record and the second round of the Class 5A state playoffs as a senior in 2008. The 5-11, 200-pound speedster rushed for 1,762 yards and 28 touchdowns, while averaging nearly seven yards per carry. He also caught 42 passes for 594 yards and five touchdowns out of the backfield and was a threat as a kickoff and punt returner. Burkhead was honored for his efforts as a senior, being named a first-team Class 5A all-state selection by the Associated Press. He was also named the *Dallas Morning News*' All-Area Offensive Player of the Year. Recent winners of that award have included Graham Harrell, Chase Daniel and Matthew Stafford. The *Dallas Morning News* listed him among the top 25 prospects in the Dallas Metroplex and as one of the top 30 recruits in the state. Burkhead is ranked among the top 250 overall prospects in the country by Rivals.com and is listed among that service's top 10 all-purpose backs. He is also regarded as one of the top 40 prospects in Texas by Rivals. Burkhead chose Nebraska after also visiting Texas A&M, and receiving offers from dozens of other BCS schools.

Why Rex chose Nebraska: "It came down to a couple things. Mostly, that I felt it was the place where I felt I fit in the best, and I felt like it was the right time to make my decision. It was really everything about Nebraska - the student body, the coaches, the players, the academics. I can just see myself being there for the next four years."

Plano Head Coach Jaydon McCullough: "He was invaluable. The leadership, the physical play, the 6,000 yards of total offense over the four years he was here, 51 varsity games - there aren't words to explain how important he was to our program. He just made everyone around him better."



JESSE COFFEY, OL

Denton, Texas
(Guyer)

Height: 6-7 • Weight: 290
40-yard dash: 5.3



Bio: Coffey is one of four offensive linemen in the Nebraska class, all of whom stand at least 6-5 and weigh at least 260 pounds. Coffey is also one of eight recruits to join the Husker program from the state of Texas. Coffey earned honorable-mention Associated Press Class 4A all-state honors for Coach John Walsh at Denton's Guyer High School and was a first-team all-area selection by the *Dallas Morning News*. He was a key part of Guyer's 12-3 record and 4A state semifinal appearance in just the school's third year of varsity football. A three-year starter, Coffey graded out above 90 percent during the 2008 season and recorded more than 50 pancake blocks. Coffey's play helped Guyer make a dramatic turnaround from the 2007 season when it won just one game. Despite the lack of team success, Coffey was noticed by schools around the country, and chose Nebraska over numerous offers including Kansas and Texas A&M. Coffey only visited Nebraska and committed to the Huskers after attending camp in Lincoln last summer. Coffey was listed No. 35 on the *Dallas Morning News*' list of top players in the area. He is ranked as one of the top 60 offensive tackle prospects in the nation by Rivals.com. Also a standout in the classroom, Coffey carries a 5.0 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale and is tied for first in his class.

Why Jesse chose Nebraska: "The people were great, the coaches were really nice and they seem like good guys. Coach (Bo) Pelini seems like he is definitely a guy I want to play for. He's a guy who is not full of himself. He's an up-and-coming head coach and he's been successful in the past. It looks like he can make Nebraska successful too and that's exciting."

Guyer Head Coach John Walsh: "His class and character are off the charts."



DEJON GOMES, DB

Hayward, Calif.
(Union City Logan/CC of San Francisco)

Height: 6-0 • Weight: 190
40-yard dash: 4.45



Bio: Defensive back Dejon Gomes is one of two players in the 2009 recruiting class who joined the Huskers at the start of the second semester. He is also one of two players to join the Nebraska program from the junior college ranks. Gomes will have three years to complete two seasons of eligibility at Nebraska. Gomes comes to Nebraska after two impressive seasons at the City College of San Francisco, the same school that produced Husker quarterback Zac Lee and former NU receiver Maurice Purify. Gomes recorded 39 tackles during the 2008 season for Coach George Rush's team. The 6-0, 190-pound Gomes also had four interceptions, 14 pass breakups and five tackles for loss. For his play, Gomes earned all-conference honors in 2008. His strong performance last fall came on the heels of an outstanding freshman season. Gomes recorded 34 tackles, four interceptions, seven breakups and four tackles for loss during the 2007 campaign, helping the Rams to a national championship. Gomes, rated a three-star prospect by Rivals.com, starred as a prep at Logan High School in Union City, Calif. He primarily played running back in high school and rushed for about 1,000 yards and 24 touchdowns as a senior, before switching to defense for college. Gomes chose Nebraska after also visiting Houston.

Why Dejon chose Nebraska: "It was the tradition, the facilities and the environment. I loved the whole college football 'feel' and how the fans are all fired up on game day. I was there for their game against Colorado. It was like nothing I've ever seen before in a college environment."



ANDREW GREEN, DB

San Antonio, Texas
(Madison)

Height: 6-0 • Weight: 180
40-yard dash: 4.5



Bio: Green starred at James Madison High School, where he helped Coach Jim Streety's team to a 9-3 record and a trip to the second round of the Class 5A state playoffs. Green amassed 56 tackles, while adding 10 pass breakups and a fumble recovery and earned second-team all-area honors from the *San Antonio Express-News*. Green also returned kicks for Madison and was a first-team all-district pick for his efforts on special teams. Green also dominated in the secondary as a junior, when he picked off five passes and recorded eight pass breakups, while also making 70 tackles. Green also rushed for nearly 700 yards and six touchdowns as a junior and was a second-team all-district pick. His play during his junior season helped Madison to the Class 5A state semifinals. Rivals.com listed Green among the top 45 cornerback prospects and among the nation's most physical prospects at the position. He is listed among the top 75 overall in the state of Texas by Rivals and the *Dallas Morning News*. Green chose Nebraska over Big 12 rivals Oklahoma, Missouri, Oklahoma State, Colorado, Baylor and Iowa State. His father, Tony, played college football at Baylor from 1975 to 1978. His uncle, Gary, also played for the Bears and went on to play nine seasons in the NFL as a cornerback, including four seasons as a Pro Bowler.

Why Andrew chose Nebraska: "It's where my heart felt right. I just kept praying and praying about where I should go. It just felt right."

Madison Head Coach Jim Streety: "Andrew has what it takes to be a great cover corner because he runs real well and has good instincts and good ball skills."



CODY GREEN, QB

Dayton, Texas
(Dayton HS)

Height: 6-4 • Weight: 220
40-yard dash: 4.6



Bio: Cody Green is one of the most heralded recruits in the 2009 Nebraska signing class and is regarded as one of the nation's top quarterback recruits. Green is one of two members of the Nebraska recruiting class who are already on campus, as he joined the Huskers for the second semester. The 6-4, 220-pound Green is coming off an outstanding senior season where he led Dayton High and Coach Jerry Stewart to a 13-2 record and a Class 4A state runner-up finish. A true dual threat as a signal caller, Green amassed nearly 5,000 yards of total offense. Green threw for 3,265 yards and 37 touchdowns, while rushing for 1,610 yards and 25 touchdowns. In leading the Broncos to the state title game, Green produced more than 1,000 yards passing and nearly 800 rushing yards in six playoff games. For his efforts, Green was named first-team all-area by the *Houston Chronicle* as a utility player and was also an honorable-mention Class 4A all-state selection by the *Associated Press*. Green was listed as the No. 12 player on the *Austin American-Statesman's* Feb 55 list and is ranked among the top 25 players in the Lone Star State by Rivals.com and *Dallas Morning News*. Rivals.com ranks Green as the nation's No. 6 dual-threat quarterback. Green received numerous offers from around the country, but only visited Nebraska and committed to the Huskers last July.

Why Cody chose Nebraska: "Just getting up there to see everything and the fan base. Once I saw it, I was pretty much sold. It was amazing. I went on visits to a lot of big schools, but I never saw anything like that before. Nowhere else had anything like that."

Dayton Offensive Coordinator Jeff Nations: "Cody as a player is a kid that you hope to get once in a lifetime, once in a career. He's got all the tools. He's 6-4, 220 pounds and God blessed him with a cannon on his arm."



J.T. KERR, TE

San Diego, Calif.
(Scripps Ranch)

Height: 6-4 • Weight: 230
40-yard dash: 4.78



Bio: Tight end J.T. Kerr is part of a strong contingent of Californians in Nebraska's 2009 recruiting class. A San Diego native, Kerr is one of six Californians to sign with the Huskers. Kerr was limited as a senior because of an injury, but was still a factor in the passing game for Scripps Ranch High and Coach Sergio Diaz. The 6-4, 230-pound Kerr caught 21 passes for 294 yards and three touchdowns, while controlling the line of scrimmage as a blocker. His play helped Scripps Ranch to an 8-4 record and a trip to the second round of the state playoffs. Kerr spent his junior season at Fallbrook High School, where he caught 12 passes for 146 yards and a touchdown. Despite changing schools, Kerr drew the attention of recruiting analysts around the country. He is ranked among the top 40 tight ends in the country and is listed among the top 75 players in California by Rivals.com. Kerr was also named to the *San Diego Union-Tribune's* all-academic team. He chose Nebraska over Arizona and San Diego State.

Why J.T. chose Nebraska: "It just seemed like the right place for me. Both the times I went out there, I loved everything about it. The only thing I was questioning was the distance from home, but I realized that was the place for me and I can be the best player at the University of Nebraska. I'd love to be a notable player in the Big 12."

Scripps Ranch Head Coach Sergio Diaz: "He's really able to really get to the third level and get past linebackers and start going against DBs. And size-wise, he's going to outmatch any DB out there. He gave us that extra element coming from the middle of the field."

2009 Recruiting Class



BRANDON KINNIE, WR

Kansas City, Mo. (Grandview)
Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College
Height: 6-3 • Weight: 215
40-yard dash: 4.46



Bio: Brandon Kinnie joins the Nebraska program after two seasons at Fort Scott Community College in Kansas. The 6-3, 215-pounder will add a big, physical player to the Nebraska receiving corps. Kinnie, one of two players to join the Huskers from the junior-college ranks, will have three seasons of eligibility at Nebraska. Kinnie is coming off an impressive 2008 season, when he earned first-team All-Jayhawk League honors. Kinnie caught 62 passes for 845 yards and 10 touchdowns, and also returned two kickoffs for 79 yards for Coach Jeff Sims. His play helped Fort Scott to a 9-2 record and No. 6 final national ranking. Fort Scott capped its season with a 30-14 victory over Blinn (Texas) College in the Heart of Texas Bowl. Kinnie caught a touchdown pass and blocked a punt in the game and was chosen as the bowl's Most Valuable Player. Kinnie also attended Fort Scott in 2007, but sat out the season as a redshirt. Kinnie is ranked among the top 75 overall junior-college prospects in the country by Rivals.com. He played his prep football at Grandview (Mo.) High School in the Kansas City area. He earned all-state honors at Grandview, where he was also a basketball standout. Kinnie originally committed to Kansas State out of high school. Kinnie chose Nebraska over Kansas and Arkansas.

Why Brandon chose Nebraska: "I liked everything about them. I liked everything about the town when I went up there. Everybody showed a lot of love. Coach (Ted) Gilmore has shown a lot of love since I met him. We had a good relationship and bonded real well. He's been real genuine, really up front about what I needed to do to help the program in a good way."

Fort Scott Community College assistant coach Michael Chandler: "He has tremendous upside. We have a corner going to Texas A&M and he can't stop Brandon in practice. I think he can be unstoppable. And he's still maturing."



ERIC MARTIN, LB

Moreno Valley, Calif.
(Rancho Verde HS)
Height: 6-2 • Weight: 216
40-yard dash: 4.65



Bio: Martin was a two-year starter for coach Pete Duffy at Rancho Verde High, totaling more than 130 tackles to go along with eight sacks. For his efforts, Martin was named a first-team California all-state pick. He was also the Inland Valley League Defensive MVP and was named to the Inland Empire all-defensive team. Rivals.com ranks Martin with three stars and as the No. 26 inside linebacker nationally. The recruiting site also lists him as the No. 38-ranked player at all positions in California. Martin chose Nebraska over Arizona, Arizona State, Washington and Washington State with additional interest from USC and UCLA.

Why Eric chose Nebraska: "We were looking at as far as depth chart, as far as [playing time], how I fit in with the coaches, stuff like that. I liked the other schools too, but Nebraska is more of a football environment and would help me to get where I needed to go."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "I'm a huge Eric Martin fan. He comes from one of the best programs in the Inland Empire, which in my opinion is the best high school football in California. He was recruited by a lot of Pac Ten programs, but Nebraska did a tremendous job. This kid is just a tremendous athlete, and when he hits you - you go down. He can cover and he can turn his hips and run, which is important as an outside linebacker."

Rancho Verde Head Coach Pete Duffy: "I've never had a kid like him before. I've had some great players, but no one who brings everything they have on every play and in every practice. It doesn't matter if he's hurt or not, he still flies around and hits the crap out of everything in front of him. He's a leader and a great example for the rest of the guys on the team. In fact, if you told me I could take just one player off my team last year, I would take Eric before anyone else; I think he's that special."



TAYLOR MARTINEZ, ATH

Corona, Calif.
(Centennial)
Height: 6-1 • Weight: 185
40-yard dash: 4.47



Bio: Taylor Martinez is a talented all-around athlete who has the ability to play on either side of the ball at Nebraska. Martinez was a dual threat quarterback for Coach Matt Logan at Corona's Centennial High School during his senior season. Martinez passed for better than 3,000 yards and threw 28 touchdowns, while completing about 61 percent of his attempts. On the ground, Martinez added 750 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns. His play helped Centennial to a perfect 15-0 season and a state championship, culminated by a victory over prep powerhouse De La Salle High, when Martinez threw for 243 yards. Centennial High finished No. 2 nationally in the *USA Today's* final high school rankings. Martinez was named the Big VIII League's Most Valuable Player and also earned the *Los Angeles Times'* Glenn Davis Player of the Year Award. A first-team all-state selection, Martinez was also the Inland Division Offensive Player of the Year. Martinez spent only one season at Centennial High School. As a junior, he played quarterback at San Bernadino Cajon High and accounted for about 1,500 yards of total offense. Martinez spent his freshman and sophomore seasons at Norco High, where he earned the majority of his playing time in the secondary. Martinez is ranked among the top athlete prospects in the nation and among the top 50 players in California by Rivals.com. Martinez committed to Nebraska last August and only visited the Huskers.

Why Taylor chose Nebraska: "I think Nebraska really has a bright future. They almost went 10-2 this year and are going to a good bowl. I think next year they'll be in the top 25 and every year after continue moving up. I'm looking forward to being part of it all."

Centennial Head Coach Matt Logan: "It looks like he's barely running and he's outrunning guys who are fast. It's just amazing."



LAZARRI MIDDLETON, DB

Long Beach, Calif.
(Polytechnic HS)

Height: 6-1 • Weight: 190
40-yard dash: 4.48



Bio: Middleton is one of four players in the 2009 Nebraska recruiting class expected to begin their careers in the secondary. One of six Husker commits from California, Middleton didn't become a starter until his senior year at the elite Polytechnic High School. Of course Poly players are littered throughout NFL and college rosters, so it's not easy to find playing time. Poly went 14-1, losing only to Sacramento Grant in the state's Open Division title game, and finished the season ranked 10th nationally in the final *USA Today* high school football poll. Middleton starred at cornerback and compiled 68 tackles (52 solo) and two interceptions. He helped the Jackrabbits hold nine opponents to 10 points or less. Middleton chose Nebraska over offers from SMU and Idaho State along with interest from Cal, UCLA, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Louisville and TCU among others. Rated by Rivals.com with three stars and as the No. 49-ranked cornerback prospect nationally, Middleton tallied 68 tackles (52 solo) and two interceptions while helping Poly finish as the California open division state runner-up. He chose Nebraska over SMU and Kansas State.

Why Lazarri chose Nebraska: "Yeah it was coach (Marvin) Sanders, coach (Bo) Pelini, the whole coaching staff. I researched coach Pelini - his success at LSU, and all the recent success he's had. Also another thing is the fan base out there in Nebraska. Everybody is rooting for you. That's kind of team I want to be on."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "I got a chance to watch him play earlier this year and he came a long way as a senior. He was a kid that didn't get a ton of opportunities to play as a junior because that's how loaded Long Beach Poly is, but he made the most of his opportunity and shot up the charts and became a highly-recruited kid."



COLE PENSICK, DL

Lincoln, Neb.
(Lincoln Northeast HS)

Height: 6-2 • Weight: 260
40-yard dash: 4.97



Bio: Pensick committed to his hometown team, becoming a second-generation Cornhusker after his father Dan lettered at NU as a defensive tackle from 1977 to 1979. One of two Nebraskans in the 2009 recruiting class, Pensick was the first commit in the class, pledging his intention over a year before signing day. Despite being named first-team Super State as an offensive lineman by both the *Lincoln Journal Star* and *Omaha World Herald* following his senior year, Pensick is slated for defense at Nebraska. He racked up 38 total tackles (16 solo) and three tackles for loss in limited defensive action. Pensick is rated as a three-star recruit and one of the top five players in Nebraska by Rivals.com, also rates him as the No. 79-ranked defensive tackle in the nation. He also excelled in wrestling and track for Northeast, winning the Class A shot put title as a junior with a throw of 57-10.25

Why Cole chose Nebraska: "I always wanted to be a Husker. It was an easy choice. The staff, with the strength coach and coach Pelini, they're just so energetic. They take the job seriously, but yet they're laid back. I just thought Bo was a great guy."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "He probably should have been (ranked) the number one or number two player in the state (of Nebraska). I think Cole really played his way up. He's going to need to add some weight, but that's a good thing to have."

Lincoln Northeast Coach Dave Svehla: "Cole's a talented player, but he brings so much more to the table. With him around, everyone else wants to work harder, Svehla told the *Omaha World Herald*. He was dominant in the interior, physical and explosive. He played a bit less on defense, yet still led us in sacks and tackles for losses."



BRENT QVALE, OL

Williston, N.D.
(Williston HS)

Height: 6-7 • Weight: 335
40-yard dash: 5.1



Bio: Qvale (pronounced kwal-lee) is part of an impressive batch of recruits that could form the offensive line for the future. One of four O-line commits in the class, Qvale was named the North Dakota Player of the Year and the North Dakota Gatorade Player of the Year, while garnering first-team all-state honors for the third consecutive year as an offensive tackle. He racked up 61 pancake blocks and helped guide Williston to a 7-4 record and a state playoff appearance. The Huskers first scholarship player from North Dakota since Darren Erstad joined the baseball team in 1994, Qvale also starred on the defensive side of the ball recording 101 tackles, 16 tackles for loss, 10 sacks and two pass breakups. Rivals.com ranks Qvale as a three-star prospect and the No. 88 offensive tackle nationally. Qvale is very athletic, being named first-team all-state in basketball as a junior and averaging over 20 points and 10 rebounds per game as a senior. He chose Nebraska over Wisconsin and Iowa and is no slouch in the classroom, carrying a 4.0 GPA.

Why Brent chose Nebraska: "I felt at home there. I like what the program has, and the tradition - everything about it. It was between Wisconsin and Nebraska and I just fit in better at Nebraska."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "There's a lot to like there. That's a big man to work with there. He's a very intelligent blocker. He will probably need to get a little bit stronger, but they've got the great weight program so they'll fix that."

Williston Head Coach Todd Matthews: "He's got great leadership. He's the type of kid where he carries it in a way that kids just gravitate toward him. He's the kind of kid where if you asked him on a Saturday morning to help you move furniture, he'd be there."

2009 Recruiting Class



THADDEUS RANDLE, DL

Galena Park, Texas
(North Shore HS)

Height: 6-1 Weight: 255
40-yard dash: 5.7



Bio: One of eight native Texans in the 2009 recruiting class, Randle committed to the Husker coaching staff in May of 2008. He was named first-team all-state in Texas' class 5A by the Associated Press Sports Editors after totaling 70 tackles (17 for loss), 11.5 sacks, three fumbles caused, two recovered fumbles, and 11 quarterback hurries from his defensive tackle position. Randle was named a finalist for the Touchdown Club of Houston's Defensive Player of the Year and by the *Houston Chronicle* as first-team Greater Houston. North Shore High School enjoyed during his career, winning 78 straight regular season contests, including an 8-0 regular season mark in 2008 before a second-round loss to state runner-up North Shore. As a junior his team went 14-1 and reached the state semifinals. Rivals.com rates Randle as a three-star prospect and as the No. 50 defensive tackle nationally.

Why Thaddeus chose Nebraska: "I really like Nebraska because it's a Big 12 school and because of their tradition. I was really surprised that (the scholarship offer) happened so quickly. They are really the perfect fit for me. Coach Pelini is defensive-minded and he can help me develop really quickly."

North Shore head coach David Amyond: "What the Nebraska coaches love about Thad is his pad level and leverage at defensive tackle, and the fact that he never stops moving his feet. Thad reminds them of a young Glenn Dorsey. The fact that coach Pelini is a defensive-minded head coach makes Nebraska very attractive. It will be great for Thad to learn from him."



DONTRAYEVOUS ROBINSON, RB

Euless, Texas
(Euless Trinity HS)

Height: 6-1 Weight: 215
40-yard dash: 4.5



Bio: Robinson is one of two superb Texas running backs in this year's class (also Rex Burkman). As a senior Robinson split time between tailback and fullback for perennial power Euless Trinity, which went 13-1 and was ranked No. 1 in the nation for part of the year. He rushed for 614 yards and 11 touchdowns on 112 carries. As a junior, he tallied 885 yards, averaging 6.5 per carry, with 17 touchdowns as Trinity won its second Class 5A title in three seasons. He also had 16 receptions for 226 yards with a score that season. Rivals.com rates Robinson with as a three-star back, after he earning first-team all-district honors. Robinson chose Nebraska over offers from New Mexico, Ole Miss, Tulsa, and Utah.

Why Dontrayevous chose Nebraska: "I like everything about it. I like the facilities, I looked it up on the internet, they've got my major in business, and I know the program. When I was little I always watched them."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "Robinson did everything he could to carry his team. He has a good frame, good size and good quickness. He's more of a 'between-the-tackles' runner. He comes from that great high school program where he's used to winning and he's going to bring that with him to Nebraska."

Trinity Head Coach Steve Lineweaver: "He can do it all. He's 6-foot and 225 pounds. He can catch it with one hand if he has to. He can throw it 65 yards. He's just very athletic. But he's got to overcome some injuries. He definitely hasn't reached his potential yet."



JEREMIAH SIRLES, OL

Lakewood, Colo.
(Bear Creek HS)

Height: 6-6 • Weight: 280
40-yard dash: 5.0



Bio: Sirles didn't give up a sack during a senior campaign that saw his team finish 8-3 after a second round loss in the Colorado class 5A playoffs. Ranked as a three-star lineman, he was rated the No. 6 player in Colorado and the No. 45-ranked offensive tackle nationally according to Rivals.com. Sirles and his linemen helped their quarterback Zach Thenell lead the state in passing, while chewing up 215 yards per game on the ground. Sirles was named to the *Rocky Mountain News* All-Colorado team after both his junior and senior seasons. He helped Bear Creek to the state quarterfinals as a junior. The No. 45-ranked offensive tackle by Rivals.com, had numerous offers from around the nation and ultimately chose Nebraska over schools such as Oregon, Texas Tech, California and Arizona State.

Why Jeremiah chose Nebraska: "You can see that tradition is coming back. Bo Pelini is bringing the tradition back to Nebraska. I saw that and I wanted to be a part of bringing that winning tradition back to Nebraska. The whole game day experience leading up to kickoff and the intensity after kickoff. Fans know who you are by name when you walk down the tunnel... it literally gave me goosebumps."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "I love this kid. He was underappreciated a bit in Colorado because he was injured as a junior. He came back strong as a senior and was much better and improved overall. He has a great frame to work with and he just has a real nastiness about him. His high school coach said that he's the nastiest player he's ever worked with, and as an offensive lineman I like hearing that."

Bear Creek head coach Tom Thenell: "Jeremiah's leadership up front is unquestioned. He is a talented blocker in run or pass situations. He's really strong and he moves his feet well. The upside on this kid is absolutely huge right now."



DIJON WASHINGTON, DB

Lawndale, Calif.
(Leuzinger HS)
Height: 6-0 • Weight: 175
40-yard dash: 4.5



Bio: Washington totaled approximately 70 total tackles, two interceptions and one fumble recovery as a senior, earning first-team all-league and a third-team CIF all-state honors. As a junior he was a standout on both sides of the ball, catching 15 passes for 300 yards and five TDs. On defense he earned first-team all-league honors after totaling 50 tackles, two interceptions and one sack. Rivals.com ranks Washington with four stars and as the No. 13 safety nationally. Rivals also lists Washington as the No. 35 player in California at all positions. Washington chose Nebraska over offers from Oregon State, Washington, Washington State and San Diego State.

Why Dijon chose Nebraska: "I think the program had a really good season this year and I think it's only going to get better in the years to come. The coaches are great as are the facilities and support there."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "He is a hard-hitting safety prospect from one the top inner-city programs in Los Angeles. This kid will just come up and knock your nose in the dirt on every single play, and as a defensive-minded coach I'm sure they're going to love that. He's got a good frame, but he's going to need to bulk up a little bit. I love the way that he comes up and hits."

Leuzinger Head Coach Deon Toliver: "He really loved it there and his style of play is perfectly suited to play in the Big 12. Dijon is a downhill safety and loves to come up and punish people. He definitely is one of those guys that plays the run first and when he comes up to make a tackle, he's not just looking to take you down nice, he wants to take your head off."



CHRIS WILLIAMS, LB

Abilene, Texas
(Abilene HS)
Height: 6-0 • Weight: 230
40-yard dash: 4.52



Bio: Despite an injury-shortened year (knee), Williams shared the Player of the Year award in District 3-5A during his senior year while tallying 96 total tackles (62 solo), 17 tackles for loss, two sacks, two interceptions, two forced fumbles, two fumble recoveries, one pass breakup, one blocked punt and one defensive touchdown. Abilene went 10-0 before suffering a first-round loss in the Class 5A playoffs. One of the most recognized players in the 2009 class, he was one of 58 players nationally to be named a Parade All-American. As a junior, Williams was named Defensive Player of the Year on the Associated Press Sports Editors' Class 5A all-state team after recording 32 tackles for loss and 13 sacks. Rivals.com rated Williams with four stars and the No. 11 inside linebacker nationally. He chose NU over schools such as Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and LSU.

Why Chris chose Nebraska: "I am convinced they're going to get it turned around. I feel like I can help them, as being that guy that turns it around for them. I'm getting a chance to play for the guy who is arguably the best defensive coordinator, and then having the whole state behind me – that's what it's all about."

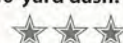
Abilene Head Coach Steve Warren: "Well he's a tremendous football player. He's got that defensive instinct that you can't coach. Our coaches have done a great job at that, enhancing it. When he gets there to the ball, he's mad and makes a big play. Obviously he has the speed, the strength and all that good stuff, but the intangible part of is something special I think."

Rivals.com's Jeremy Crabtree: "I think he's the most under-ranked linebacker in the country, period. The kid is a hard hitter. He's a 'seek-and-destroy' linebacker and I don't know how much more you need to say about it. He's just that special."



CJ ZIMMERER, FB

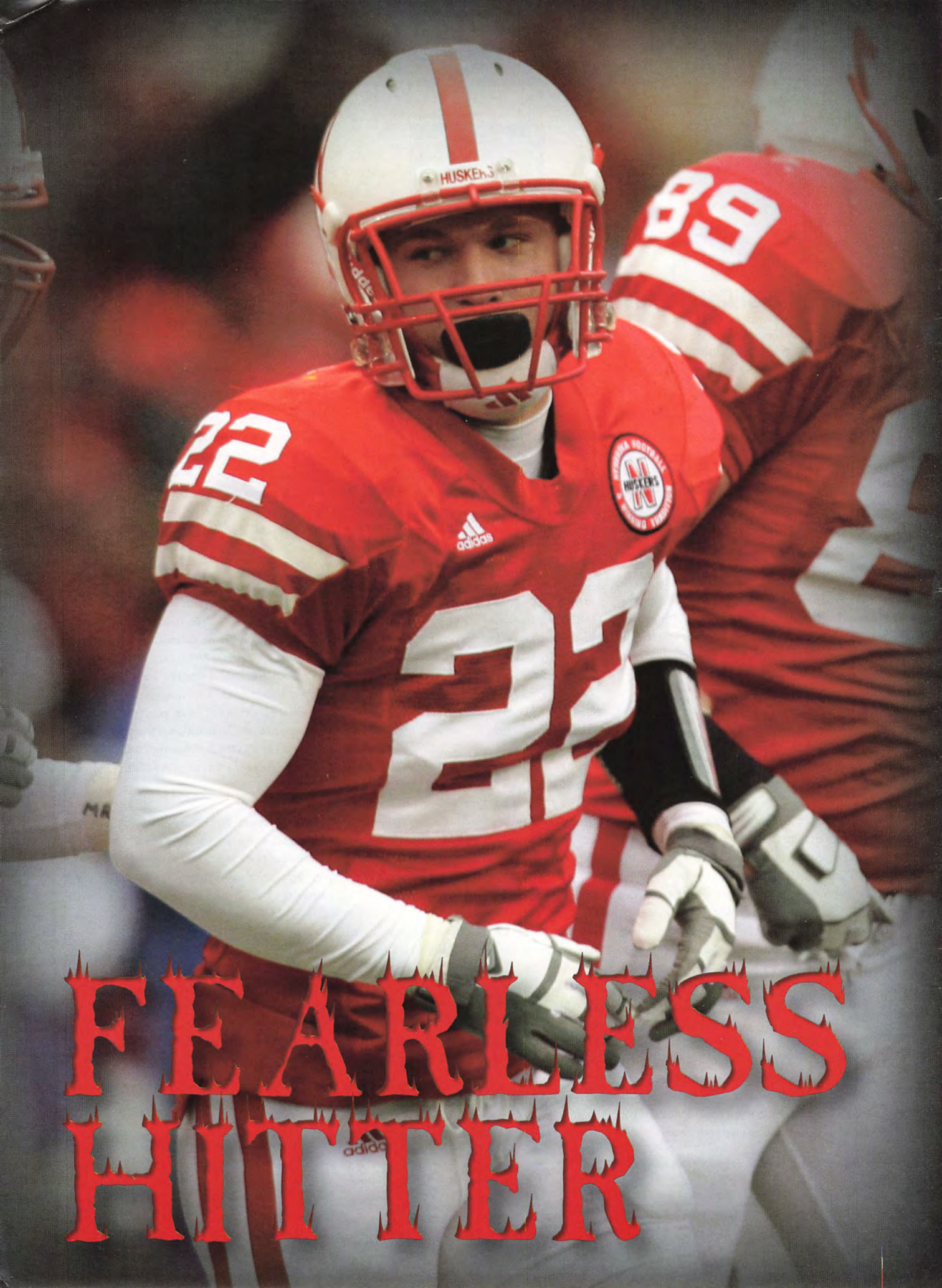
Omaha, Neb.
(Omaha Gross HS)
Height: 6-0 • Weight: 213
40-yard dash: 4.6



Bio: Zimmerer is one of two in-state recruits in this year's class. The native Cornhusker rushed 127 times for 1,325 yards and 17 touchdowns (10.4 yards per carry) from his fullback position while also totaling 90 tackles (10 for loss), two interceptions, one fumble recovery, two pass breakups and a sack at linebacker during his senior year at Omaha Gross. He is expected to play fullback for the Cornhuskers. Zimmerer's stellar senior season followed a junior season where he ran for 701 yards and 11 touchdowns on just 88 carries, while making 123 tackles, including five sacks on defense. A Rivals.com three-star prospect, Zimmerer was the No. 18-ranked fullback nationally and the No. 4 player in Nebraska according to the website. Showing his versatility as an athlete, Zimmerer was named to the *Lincoln Journal Star* Super State first team as a fullback, while the *Omaha World-Herald* made him a first-team All-Nebraska pick at linebacker."

Why CJ chose Nebraska: "Growing up in Nebraska, I've always been a Husker fan and it's always been a dream to play with that 'N' on the side of my helmet. Their facilities are amazing...I really like the coaching staff there now...I think they're headed towards the right direction."

Gross Head Coach Tim Johnk: "He's a kid that gets stronger as the game goes on and you can really see that on film. That all comes back to his work ethic in the weight room. He's just a big, physical kid who's got a lot of growing to do yet. He's worked so much harder than other kids his age; he's just a man amongst boys."



FEARLESS HITTER

MASON WALD

Sophomore ready to challenge for play at safety

He has a reputation for being fearless on the football field. "I guess people get that from my highlight tape, I don't really know," Mason Wald says. "I mean, I've never really looked at myself like that. To me, that's just how football's supposed to be played. It's a tough sport. That's why you have pads on, so you can hit people.

"That's just how I play the game."

Nebraska coaches evidently appreciate Wald's approach to the game, because as a true freshman this past season, he parlayed his hard-hitting style into immediate playing time on special teams. He appeared in all 13 games and finished with six tackles.

The 5-foot-11, 205-pound Wald, of Birmingham, Ala., was one of only three Nebraska true freshmen who played throughout the season in 2008, joining return man Alfonzo Dennard and linebacker Matt Holt. Sean Fisher and Cameron Meredith appeared in one game apiece, but suffered injuries that coaches hope will allow them to receive medical redshirts.

Wald will enter the 2009 season challenging to play on regular downs as a safety, the position at which he starred for Vestavia Hills High in Birmingham.

"I could play linebacker or corner -- I don't care where they put me, I just want to play," he said. "But most likely, it'll be strong safety. We haven't talked about any other positions.

"Last season, I wanted to play -- I didn't want to redshirt -- but I didn't expect a whole lot of playing time on defense," he added. "It's hard to come in that early and learn that whole playbook over the summer." On the other hand, "I thought I could play on special teams and maybe during the season work into playing on defense. That really didn't work out for me. But I'm definitely expecting to maybe make something happen on defense this year."

Wald will face significant competition at safety, as Nebraska returns two seniors-to-be at both safety positions -- Larry Asante and Major Culbert at strong and Rickey Thenarse and Matt O'Hanlon at free.

Wald said he needs to continue to learn Nebraska's defense.

"The biggest challenge for me was it's so much different from what we ran in high school," he said. "I mean, in high school, the coach yells, 'Cover three!' and we come out in cover three no matter what the offense comes out in. We didn't run that complex of a defense in high school. The hard thing here (at Nebraska) is, you can't just know what you're supposed to do, you pretty much have to know what everybody has to do in order to do the best job for the team.

"It just takes a little bit of getting used to. Once you understand the concepts and what they're trying to do, everything comes together

and it makes it a lot easier."

Wald arrived in Lincoln, Neb., last June to prepare for the start of preseason camp in early August. Once preseason camp commences, a true freshman "has three or four weeks tops before the season opener to learn that defense, which to me seems impossible," he said. "But with more time, it becomes easier and easier."

Last season Wald missed a lot of Nebraska's defensive meetings because he was busy much of the week preparing for scout-team duty as well as his special-teams roles -- he played on kickoff coverage and return units as well as punt return.

"During the season, I didn't quite learn about the defense as much as I would've wanted to," he said. "But learning other teams' stuff for the scout team, you kind of learn what college football's like and how teams play things. Now we're starting to do seven-on-seven stuff during these (winter workouts), and I'm getting the hang of it."

Nebraska players were given a week off following their Jan. 1 Gator Bowl victory over Clemson. They then began winter conditioning, which lasts through mid-March. The spring practice season begins March 25 and ends with the Red-White Game, set for 1 p.m. April 18.

"Once spring comes around and we have three meetings a day, it'll get a lot easier for me to pick things up," Wald said.

Because of his extensive playing time on special teams, Wald has gotten used to the speed and physical nature of the college game. He's pleased with the way he played, and he's proud of the fact he was among only five true freshmen who saw the playing field.

"The first couple games, I didn't really understand that everybody can hit hard and everybody can run," he said. "That kind of takes an adjustment. But once the season got going and I got a feel for it, I felt like I did pretty well."

His first tackle occurred on kickoff coverage in the fourth game, against Virginia Tech. He actually jarred the ball loose from the return man, but the return man recovered. Then, playing on Nebraska's kickoff return team Nov. 1 at Oklahoma, Wald again lived up to his reputation as a big hitter.

"The first kickoff return of the game, I took two guys out I hit them so hard," he said.

He said it makes sense for young players to get their feet wet playing special teams.

"It's obviously an important part of the game, but it's kind of hard for one person to screw the whole thing up on special teams," he said. "So there wasn't as much pressure on me. It was just fun to get out there and play."

WALD, CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



WALD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

College freshmen obviously face off-field challenges. Being on your own is an adjustment, Wald said. What's more, he said it's different not having parents around to make sure you do your schoolwork and get out of bed in time for workouts and classes.

At Vestavia Hills, he started every game from his sophomore through his senior years. As a senior in 2007, he made more than 100 tackles and intercepted seven passes in helping the Rebels finish 11-3, including a triumph over rival and national powerhouse Hoover High in the state quarterfinals. He was a first-team all-state pick in Alabama's largest classification by the Alabama Sports Writers Association, while the Birmingham News named him to its Super All-Metro team.

He was the last addition to Nebraska's 2008 scholarship recruiting class. At one point, he actually committed to attending Samford, a Division I-AA school in Birmingham. Then, on national letter-of-intent signing day, he found out Nebraska had a scholarship for him and signed on with the Huskers.

"It just fell into place at Nebraska," Wald said. "One kid, on the morning of signing day, didn't send his papers to Nebraska, and they gave the scholarship to me."

He had always wanted to attend Alabama, but he said the Tide's recruiting class filled up quickly. He also received scholarship offers from Kansas State, South Carolina, Tennessee and Duke.

"At first I didn't want to go far away from home, so I kind of told some people I wasn't interested," he said. "That narrowed my options. I let some teams go I probably shouldn't have."

He chuckled at the recollection.

"Then I end up going from Alabama all the way up to Nebraska," he said. "It's worked out well. I can't complain. I really like the football at Nebraska. And it's just cool being somewhere different and meeting all new people."



PENSICK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

"Carl has them playing more or less a double-gap . . . It's almost like playing the run and then playing the pass, where Cosgrove's idea was just kind of get up the field, and wherever they'd take you, you'd go. Pretty soon, you saw it. Next thing you know, they're taking everybody out of their lanes, and you could drive a truck through the holes. Now they're really making those interior guys responsible for their gaps."

"Cole fits that mold."

Pensick committed so early that he didn't receive many scholarship offers. Some schools, such as Purdue, Kansas and Kansas State, kept sending letters. Alabama kept in touch, too.

"Alabama was steady with their little cards," he said. "But after I committed, it was mainly just D-II and little schools that were sending them."

Dan Pensick has no doubts his son has what it takes to succeed on the Division I-A level.

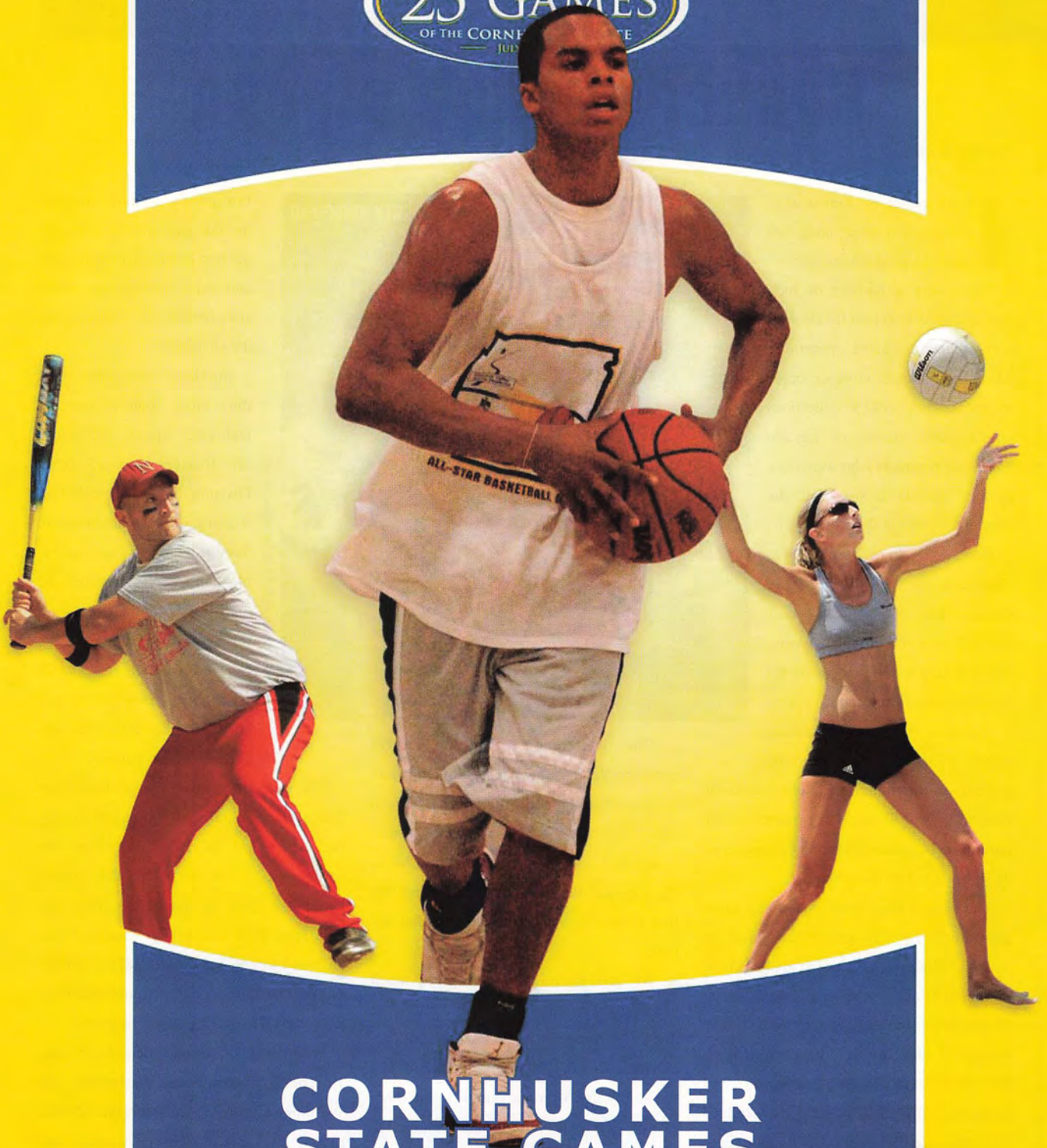
"First of all, he's got the football instincts," he said. "Those are things that are hard to teach. Along with those instincts, he's willing to pay the price. So far, he's paid the price to be able to play."

Nebraska, somewhat short on depth along the defensive line, loses interior lineman Ty Steinkuhler. His brother, Baker, a Lincoln Southwest graduate, redshirted last season and figures to see playing time this season.

"I think Baker can be as good or better than Ty, and I'm sure Ty wants him to," Pensick said.

Perhaps a pair of Lincoln natives will eventually man the middle of Nebraska's defensive line.

"There's a good a chance," Dan Pensick said. "That would be fun."



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Huskers finish strong

BY RICK SHAW

In the surface, the formation of Nebraska's 2009 recruiting class seemed typical of years past.

There were a number of high profile athletes that chose the Huskers over other big-name programs. Many more targets, however, opted to pursue their college educations on campuses outside of Lincoln and a few prospects who were once pledged to NU dropped off the Husker commit list altogether.

However, the result was significant in the fact that Head Coach **BO PELINI** and staff established a recruiting blue-print that will help benefit and shape the Nebraska program in future years.

Nebraska made a conscious effort to establish a recruiting presence in the traditional talent hotbeds of California and Texas. They succeeded by pulling in 14 athletes (among their class of 21 signees) out of those states.

The biggest haul came out of the Lone Star State, as eight prospects signed on with the Huskers. Rivals.com ranked three of the eight athletes among the state's top 35 prospects, including quarterback **CODY GREEN** of Dayton (No. 19), running back **REX BURKHEAD** of Plano (No. 28) and linebacker **CHRIS WILLIAMS** of Abilene (No. 35). Six of Nebraska's Texas signees ranked among the state's top 100.

Green appears to have the necessarily talent and athleticism to be a difference-maker for the Huskers. A mid-year enrollee, the 6-foot-4, 220-pound signal caller is already in Lincoln taking classes and will take part in spring drills with the team come April.



JOHN F. RHODES/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

"The determining factor for me (in choosing Nebraska) was just getting up there to see everything and the fan base," Green said. "Once I saw it, I was pretty much sold. It was amazing. I went on visits to a lot of big schools, but I never saw anything like that before. Nowhere else had anything like that."

"My goal for this year is to pretty much to soak in as much as possible of the offense and try to compete for the starting spot."

The 6-foot-0, 230-pound Williams has the ability to do similar things on the other side of the ball. He earned Parade All-American honors as a senior by tallying 96 tackles, 17 tackles for loss, two sacks and two interceptions.

"I am convinced they're going to get it turned around," Williams said about Nebraska. "I feel like I can help them, as being that guy that turns it around for them."

I'm getting a chance to play for the guy who is arguably the best defensive coordinator, and then having the whole state behind me – that's what it's all about."

Burkhead may have been the most highly coveted Nebraska signee. He chose the Huskers over 25 other Division I schools, including Auburn, California, Michigan, Stanford and Texas A&M. Nicknamed 'Superman' by his friends and teammates, the 5-foot-11, 190-pound back rushed for 1,762 yards and 28 touchdowns as a senior and added another 594 yards and five scores on receptions.

The Huskers snagged five athletes from California, including three listed among the state's top 44 by Rivals. Four-star cornerback **DIJON WASHINGTON** out of Leuzinger High in Lawndale (No. 35), linebacker **ERIC MARTIN** of Rancho Verde High in Moreno Valley (No. 38) and athlete **TAYLOR MARTINEZ** out of Centennial High in Corona (No. 44) headline the group.

Washington spurned offers from Pac-10 schools Oregon State, Washington and Washington State to join Nebraska. Martin, picked the Huskers over Arizona and Arizona State.

It was Martinez, however, who picked up the most post-season honors. As a quarterback, he lead his team to the Division I championship with a victory over Concord De La Salle. He was the team, league, and division MVP as a senior and California

player-of-the-year according to the Press-Enterprise and Los Angeles Times.

"I talked to coach (**SHAWN**) **WATSON**, the quarterbacks coach, and I talked to him about playing quarterback," Martinez said. "When I get out there, I'm going to start at quarterback and if I don't work out with that, I'll move over to safety."

"I think Nebraska really has a bright future. They almost went 10-2 this year and are going to a good bowl. I think next year they'll be in the top 25 and every year after continue moving up. I'm looking forward to being part of it all."

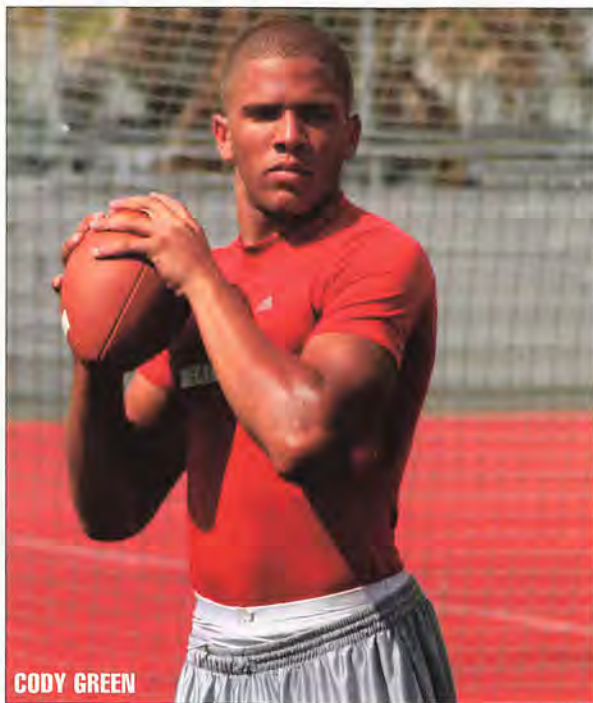
Nebraska also signed a handful of standouts from the Midland region including two of the Husker state's best in **C.J. ZIMMERER** of Gross High in Omaha and Cole Pensick of Northeast High in Lincoln. Rivals.com ranked Zimmerer the No. 4 prospect in the state and Pensick No. 5. **JEREMIAH SIRLES** a 6-foot-6, 280-pound lineman from Lakewood (Colo.) Bear Creek, was rated by Rivals as the sixth best prospect in his state while **BRENT QVALE** (6-foot-7, 300-pounds) was considered North Dakota's top prep player.

"Every time I come to Lincoln though, I feel more and more comfortable with my decision to go to Nebraska," Zimmerer said. "The players are great, the coaches are great, the support staff is great - it just makes the decision to go to Nebraska seem all the more easy. I feel good about the future of Nebraska football."

The 2009 recruiting cycle, as with past

years, came with a few bumps along the way. Through the process, the Huskers lost three-star defensive end commit **KEVIN YOUNG**, of Olathe (Kan.) North to the University of Kansas and had mutual partings with Houston (Texas) **ALIEF TAYLOR** defensive end **EMERSON EVANS**, Euless (Texas) Trinity linebacker **EARNEST NORMAN** and Scranton (Pa.) West Scranton linebacker **SHAWN BODTMANN**.

In addition, longtime Husker commit **DEANDRE BYRD** out of Lincoln High in Tallahassee (Fla.) did not sign with the Huskers. The 5-foot-10, 170-pound cornerback will instead enroll in junior college in the fall with a goal of earning his



CODY GREEN

Associate's degree and making his way back to Lincoln in another year or two.

In the end, the Husker recruiting campaign for 2009 was filled with a lot more positive than negative. After finishing the 2008 campaign with nine wins and a bowl victory on New Years Day, the Nebraska coaches seemingly put a lot of pieces in place to continue the Husker's climb back towards the nation's elite. **N**

SIDELINES



WORKING TOGETHER

BO PELINI and his staff got a late start in recruiting a year ago, as assistants were brought on-board after he replaced **BILL CALLAHAN** as head coach. Being together as a group made a difference in recruiting. "We recruited these kids from start to finish; there were relationships built," he said. "It's always a hectic process, but I think this one, the process this year, was a little smoother, obviously."



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Closing out the class

by Sean Stevens

In early December, Nebraska had three linebackers committed for the 2009 recruiting class. By the end of January, that number had dwindled to just one, but then **ERIC MARTIN** (6-2/216/3-stars) of Moreno Valley, Calif. joined the group.

Early attention was key to NU gaining Martin's pledge.

"Them being my first offer – that was a risk they took. I wasn't the greatest academic student, so they made a big risk in offering me," he said. "They took that risk. The payout is big now. They're getting me and I get a chance to play."

Martin also visited Arizona and Arizona State before making his decision. Rivals.com's No. 26-ranked linebacker nationally liked what NU had to offer best.

"I liked the other schools too, but Nebraska is more of a football environment and would help me to get where I needed to go."

IN 2008 NEBRASKA signed 30 walk-ons. In 2009 that number should be about half, but smaller class does not mean less quality.

TY KILDOW (5-7/170/2-stars) of Millard South was closing in on a scholarship offer last summer before injuring his knee and being forced to sit out his senior year. Before his injury he had run a 4.39 second 40-yard dash at Nebraska's summer camp.

As a junior, Kildow caught 44 passes for nearly 1,000 yards and ten touchdowns. He had interest from Iowa, Iowa State, Kansas, Nebraska, Stanford, and Vanderbilt before his injury.

Afterwards Division I

interest waned. Nebraska never quit recruiting Kildow, though, and it paid off for the Big Red.

"My parents and whole family are excited. It's a good feeling. Nebraska has talked to me throughout this whole thing... being a Nebraska kid and getting the opportunity to play, interests me. I know it's a challenge and I want to take on that challenge."

NEBRASKA GRADUATED long-snapper **T.J. O'LEARY**, so walk-on commit **P.J. MANGIERI** (6-4/245) of Peoria, Ill., becomes a challenger for the position. Mangieri played offensive guard in high school, but has also honed his trade as a long-snapper.

Mangieri finished first from among the top snappers in the nation at the National Scholarship Camp this past summer. He should compete for the job immediately in Lincoln.

"At Nebraska, their long snapper graduated, which gives me the opportunity to come in and play right away," he said. "The Nebraska coaches told me that if I'm what they expect me to be, then I'll be playing my freshman year."

WIL RICHARDS (5-10/182) of Lee's Summit, Mo., was a two-time all-state selection as a safety in Missouri's largest class. A high school teammate of 2008 walk-on linebacker **MATT HOLT**, Richards chose NU over an offer from Air Force and interest from Missouri.

"Nebraska treats everybody the same. Having

"NEBRASKA

treats everybody the same.

Having that plays a big key role in what I want to do. I sat down and talked with Bo (Pelini) today and he said even a scholarship players isn't promised anything.

that plays a big key role in what I want to do. I sat down and talked with **BO (PELINI)** today and he said even a scholarship player isn't promised anything. He is just promising a chance. A chance is all I need."

SIDELINES

TWO JUCOS

BILL CALLAHAN, BO PELINI'S predecessor, relied heavily on junior college recruits. During his four years, the Cornhuskers gave scholarships to 30 junior college transfers, including 12 in 2005. Pelini's 2009 class has just two: defensive back **DEJON GOMES** and wide receiver **BRANDON KINNIE**.

Last year's class had only two junior college transfers as well: tight end **TYSON HETZER** (no longer with the team) and offensive lineman **RICKY HENRY**, from Omaha by way of North Dakota State College of Science. By all indications, Henry could have played without redshirting.

"Obviously, we'd rather move on toward high school athletes because you get a chance to get them in your program, in your culture, right from the start, develop them right from the beginning," Pelini said. "It's a thing that's going to help us down the road."

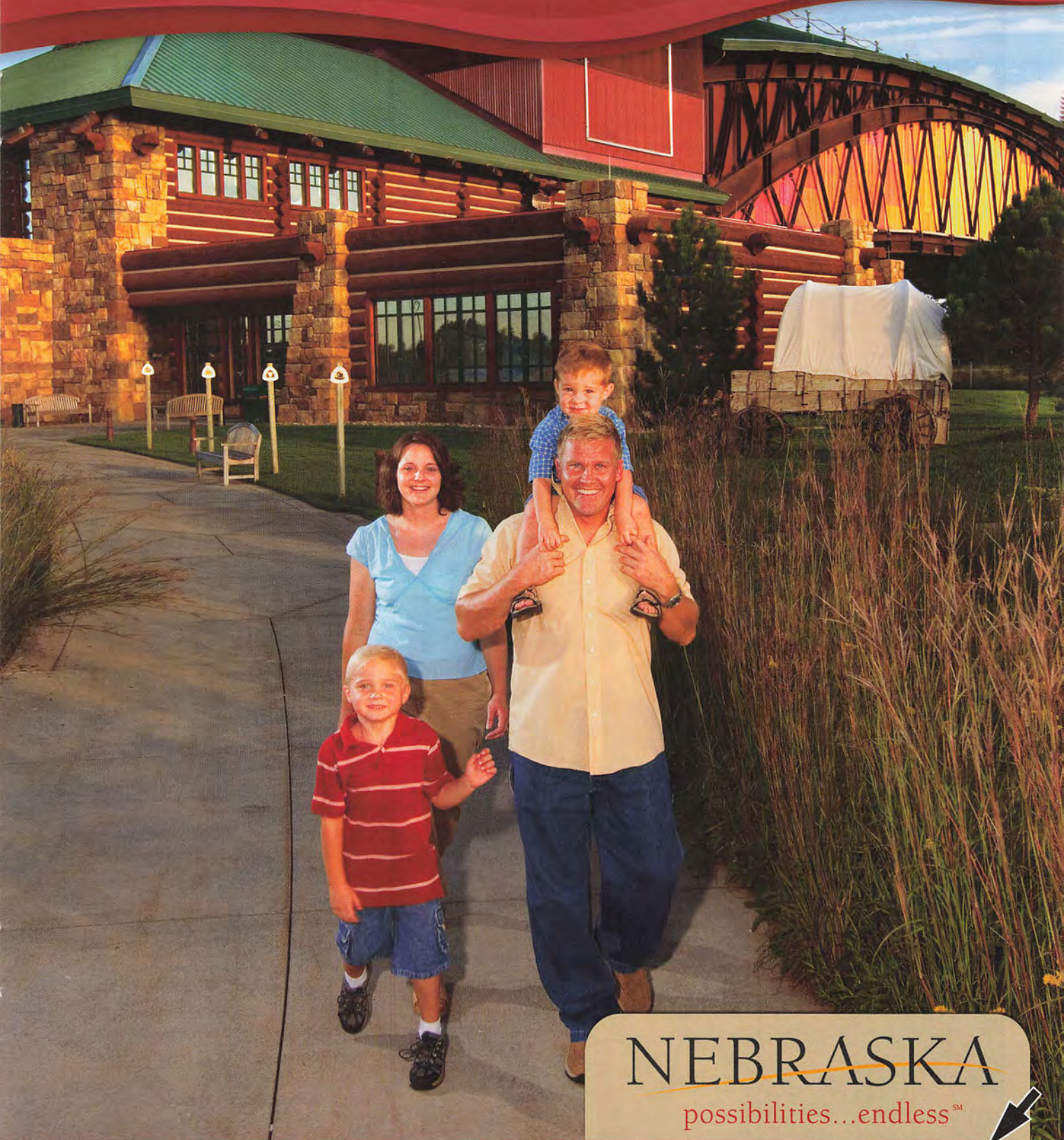
Kinnie sat out his first season in junior college and will have three seasons of eligibility.

"When we do take junior college kids, we're going to look into it and specifically know what we're getting. I thought these were two young men we felt that could come in and have an impact on us and were the right kids for our program. Not everybody is," said Pelini.

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WIL RICHARDS

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Men's Basketball

ADE DAGUNDURO

BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

Huskers set for Big 12 play

Things were looking bleak for the Nebraska men's basketball team.

The Huskers had just suffered their third consecutive loss, and their second in a row at home. A foul with 29 seconds remaining helped Kansas, ahead by one point at

the time, escape Lincoln with a 68-62 victory.

That came after Oklahoma State left Lincoln with an overtime victory.

Nebraska had two wins and four losses in Big 12 Conference play. In all four losses, the Huskers either led or were within two points in the final 5 minutes of regulation.

"I can't speak for the team, but me personally, I'm tired of giving 100-percent effort, and still not coming out with a win," Nebraska senior Ade Dagunduro said after the Kansas loss. "The win is what matters."

Nebraska coach Doc Sadler kept telling his players that their hard work and effort would eventually pay off. But he thought maybe they were tired of hearing the same speech from him.

So Sadler brought in somebody else to deliver a pep talk: Nebraska Athletic Director Tom Osborne, the former Husker football coach who won 255 games.

"He just has that power that he comes into the room and everybody's eyes are right at him and you listen to everything he says," Nebraska junior guard Sek Henry said. "It's like he's this higher power-type guy that just has a winning presence."

"He lifts me up all the time. I don't know. It's kind of weird, but that's just how I feel when he





comes in the room."

Nebraska responded by going on the road and defeating Texas Tech 82-69. The Huskers completed a two-game road trip with a grueling 55-53 victory at Colorado.

The real over-the-hump victory, though, came at home against No. 16 Texas, when the Huskers rallied from a 12-point, second-half deficit and defeated the Longhorns 58-55 for their third consecutive victory.

Suddenly, post-season talk – NCAA Tournament talk – didn't seem so far-fetched. Not with the Huskers tied for fourth place in the Big 12 standings.

"First of all, we've been here many times and it's not come down like this, but the effort has been the same," Sadler said after the Texas victory. "I think our guys, as they have every game, find a way to overachieve and stay in there. This time, at least, we got some good luck."

The Huskers' victory over Texas was their first over a ranked team this season. Nebraska has beaten at least one ranked team in each of the last nine seasons, and improved to 5-8 against ranked teams under Sadler, who's in his third season.

While the Texas victory and a victory over Missouri can be labeled "quality" wins on an NCAA Tournament resume, the Huskers are also saddled with some "bad" losses – namely a home defeat to Maryland-Baltimore County and a road loss to Oregon State.

That's why Nebraska's road to the post-season figures to be bumpy. To even gain consideration for the NCAA Tournament bubble, the Huskers must finish no worse than 9-7 in league play, and no worse than fifth place in the league. To get there, Nebraska must win its remaining three home games – Colorado, Texas A&M and Iowa State – and win one more road game.

Then, Nebraska needs one victory in the Big 12 Tournament – and perhaps two – to keep NCAA Tournament selection committee members interested.

The Huskers, who advanced to the National Invitation Tournament's second round last season, haven't been to the NCAA Tournament since the 1997-98 season.

A hot streak midway through Big 12 play, though, isn't inflating the Huskers' egos – the same way a losing skid didn't derail their season.

"Not at all," Dagunduro said. "We've just got to stay hungry and maintain and try to build off this momentum that we've got going and stay focused."

DIAZ TO REDSHIRT

Nebraska 6-foot-11 freshman center Brian Diaz arrived in Lincoln on Jan. 17 and practiced for the first time on Jan. 19. He suited up for two games before telling Sadler he wanted to redshirt.

"He just didn't think he was ready," said Sadler, who encouraged Diaz to play. "He told me he's not in near the shape he needs to be in."

Diaz had participated in six practices when he made his decision.

"He just said, 'Coach, I don't think I can help the team.' I told him I disagree with him because I think he can help the team," Sadler said.

"But ultimately, I didn't get him in school when I told him I was going to get him in school. I'm not going to penalize him. It's nobody's fault. He just didn't get a test score."

Diaz, from Puerto Rico, hadn't met Nebraska's English proficiency requirements, causing the delay in his arrival.

2008-09 MEN'S BASKETBALL (15-7, 5-4 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Nov. 7	Chadron State (exh.), W, 85-54
Nov. 16	San Jose State, W, 63-46
Nov. 19	at TCU, W, 62-50
Nov. 22	Arkansas-Pine Bluff, W, 67-53
Nov. 25	Saint Louis, W, 71-57
Nov. 29	Creighton, W, 54-52
Dec. 3	Alabama State, W, 80-51
Dec. 7	at Arizona State, L, 64-44
Dec. 13	at Oregon State, L, 63-64
Dec. 20	IPFW, W, 75-48
Dec. 23	UMBC, L, 64-66
Dec. 30	South Carolina State, W, 77-63
Jan. 3	Maryland Eastern Shore, W, 88-56
Jan. 5	Florida A&M, W, 81-56
Jan. 10	Missouri, W, 56-51
Jan. 14	at Iowa State, L, 65-33
Jan. 17	Kansas State, W, 73-51
Jan. 21	at Oklahoma, L, 72-61
Jan. 24	Oklahoma State, L, 76-74
Jan. 28	Kansas, L, 68-62
Jan. 31	at Texas Tech, W, 82-69
Feb. 4	at Colorado, W, 55-53
Feb. 7	Texas, W, 58-55
Feb. 14	at Missouri, Big 12 Net, 12:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	Colorado, ESPN2 8 p.m.
Feb. 21	at Kansas, Big 12 Network 3 p.m.
Feb. 24	Texas A&M, ESPN2 8:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	at Kansas State, Big 12 Net, 7 p.m.
March 4	Iowa State, 6:30 p.m.
March 7	at Baylor, Big 12 Network 3 p.m.
March 11-14	at Big 12 Champ, Big 12 Net

JACK MOORE HONORED, REMEMBERED

The Nebraska athletic department remembered and honored one of the greatest playmakers in school history with Jack Moore Day on Feb. 7.

Moore lettered from 1979 to 1982 and won the 1982 Francis Pomeroy-Naismith Award as the nation's most outstanding senior under 6 feet, the same season he earned first-team All-Big Eight honors.

Moore scored 1,204 career points, and his 382 career assists are seventh on Nebraska's all-time chart. Moore's 90.1 percent career performance at the free-throw line still ranks sixth in NCAA Division I history.

March 3 will mark the 25-year anniversary of a plane crash that killed Moore, 24, and pilot Gary Johnson, 47. Nebraska names its annual MVP basketball award in honor of Moore. **N**

Women's Basketball



CORY MONTGOMERY

BY TONY BOONE

Montgomery leads injured Huskers

At times, Connie Yori feels as if she has asked the world of Cory Montgomery. Then again, the seventh-year Nebraska women's basketball coach didn't really have a choice.

With two-time All-Big 12 forward Kelsey Griffin redshirting this season following ankle surgery, the Huskers needed someone to fill the void left by her absence. Montgomery became that player. The 6-foot-2 junior from Cannon Falls, Minn., has led Nebraska in both scoring and rebounding while logging more than 30 minutes of playing time per game - the most by any Nebraska player in the past four seasons. The Huskers simply couldn't afford to have Montgomery off the floor.

"We don't play a style that allows people to play 35 minutes a game, but that's what we're doing with her," Yori said. "It's kind of unfair. We've asked her to score 18 a game for us, get us seven or eight rebounds, guard a really good player in the full court, run up and down every possession and don't expect to come off the floor."

"She's not built to play 40 minutes a game. And we don't expect any of our kids to do that. But this year, because of where we're at, we've had to play her a lot more minutes than we would like. But immediately after we sub her out, we need to get her back in there. It's almost an impossibility."

Montgomery embraced the challenge, which should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with her history of success in almost everything she sets out to do. She graduated at the top of her high school class of 120 in Cannon Falls, learned to play four different musical instruments (clarinet, flute, piano and saxophone) and was a five-time most valuable player of her high school varsity team, including once as an eighth grader.

The 21-year-old has always been self-motivated, whether it came to teaching herself how to play the flute, settling for nothing less than an A in the classroom or excelling in athletics. Last summer, she pushed herself to be ready for this season, knowing her role for the Huskers would be greater.

"I knew this year had the potential to be a big year from me," Montgomery said. "Danielle (Page) graduated, so there was that open starting spot to step into. I had a good year last year, so I just tried to work in the off-season to get ready to provide the team with anything I can give them."

Admitting she had no idea how much that would actually be, Montgomery has accepted the responsibility of becoming Nebraska's go-to player. Although the Huskers managed only one win during the first half of their conference season, their junior post has been outstanding. Montgomery posted three consecutive 20-point games during one stretch, including a 22-point, 14-rebound effort in a close loss to No. 8 Baylor.

"She's taken on a big role," Yori said. "Her role has changed dramatically from a year ago. Last year, she came off the bench and was a good player, but wasn't counted on to be the No. 1 post player or scoring option. Now, she is. It's a big challenge, a big jump. She's done a really good job of taking it to heart."

The Nebraska coach has always thought Montgomery had the potential to be a good college player. Yori first noticed her at a Nebraska basketball camp during the summer following her freshman year in high school. A year later, the future post player won a 3-point shooting contest at the same camp and

garnered an early scholarship offer from the Huskers. She eventually chose Nebraska over four Big 10 schools, Drake and Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Montgomery's all-around game has become sharper and more consistent during her time in Lincoln, Yori said. But the coach believes the junior's best days with the Huskers still lie ahead.

In an ideal situation, Montgomery would play approximately 25 minutes a game, which Yori thinks would maximize her production. This season, she's played while tired because Nebraska didn't have Griffin or 6-4 reserve Nikki Bober, who was lost for the season with an ACL tear in late December, in its post rotation. All three return next season, giving the Huskers one of the top front lines in the Big 12. But that's still a few months away, leaving

Montgomery concerned about turning around the Huskers' current struggle for the final month of the 2008-09 campaign.

"We just have to have good mental toughness and have that show through," she said. "There were a bunch of games where we were right there. If we would've done a couple of things right, we would've won those games."

STREAKS IN DANGER

Nebraska has won 18 or more games and has advanced to post-season play in each of the last five seasons under Yori. Injuries and an inability to close out close games in conference play have both of those streaks in jeopardy.

The Huskers entered the second half of their Big 12 season tied for last in the league standings. Their overall record dropped below .500 even though they were competitive in nearly every game of a loaded conference. But that's been of little consolation to Yori, who has had only three losing seasons in her previous 16 as a Division I coach. Barring a late-season turnaround, including a run in the upcoming Big 12 Tournament in Oklahoma City, Nebraska may be ending its season a bit earlier than usual.

FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHTER

With Griffin out for the season and only one other senior (guard Tay Hester) on its roster, Nebraska is going through a bit of a youth movement. Its recent lineup has consisted of two juniors and three sophomores, who have less than 200 combined career starts.

The Huskers were picked to finish seventh in the Big 12 this season when they were at full strength. They've struggled while short-handed, although they should be much more experienced for the 2009-10 campaign, when everyone but Hester returns. But that's still a ways away.

"You keep focusing on today and trying to get better," Yori said. "We'll try to get wins this year and prepare for the future too." **N**

2008-09 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (10-12, 1-8 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Oct. 31	Chadron State (exh.), W, 102-30
Nov. 5	vs. Neb.-Kearney (EXH.), W, 80-69
Nov. 14	Weber State, W, 96-47
Nov. 17	at Creighton, W, 72-67
Nov. 22	Southern Utah, W, 65-57
Nov. 24	at Denver, W, 76-55
Nov. 28	vs. Butler, W, 67-54
Nov. 29	at New Mexico, L, 51-62
Dec. 2	Oral Roberts, W, 70-51
Dec. 6	Ohio State, L, 65-69
Dec. 9	Cal State Bakersfield, W, 70-57
Dec. 12	Long Beach State, W, 76-44
Dec. 20	at UTEP, L, 53-63
Dec. 28	Arizona State, W, 62-58
Jan. 1	at LSU, L, 50-64
Jan. 10	Oklahoma, L, 77-56
Jan. 14	at Texas, L, 74-60
Jan. 17	at Missouri, L, 67-66
Jan. 21	Kansas, W, 67-58
Jan. 24	Iowa State, L, 62-48
Jan. 27	at Kansas State, L, 51-40
Jan. 31	at Colorado, L, 75-73
Feb. 4	Baylor, L, 76-71
Feb. 8	at Texas A&M, L, 86-43
Feb. 14	Texas Tech, Noon
Feb. 18	at Iowa State, 7 p.m.
Feb. 21	Missouri, 7:05 p.m.
Feb. 25	Kansas State, 7:05 p.m.
Feb. 28	at Kansas, 7 p.m.
Mar. 3	Colorado, 7:05 p.m.
Mar. 7	at Oklahoma State, 6 p.m.
Mar. 12-15	at Big 12 Championship

Baseball

DJ BELFONTE



Anderson to rely on versatility in 2009

BY TERRY DOUGLASS

Nebbraska baseball coach Mike Anderson admits that it was difficult letting go of last season's team. After all, there was plenty to like about the 2008 edition of the Cornhuskers.

Despite a perceived lack of star power, Nebraska parlayed good pitching, timely hitting and rock-solid team chemistry into a 41-16-1 season.

Despite once again facing some significant personnel losses due to expiring eligibility and the major league baseball amateur draft, Anderson said this year's Nebraska squad is giving off much the same "vibe" as last year's team.

"Love our kids," said Anderson, whose team opens the season Feb. 20 at Louisiana-Lafayette. "They've done a lot of great things off the field so far. It's one of our

best academic groups at the University of Nebraska for baseball in the last 20 years.

"They're setting great examples, doing great things, and it's great to be around them."

Senior Jake Mort, Nebraska's returning starter at third base, agreed.

"I think there are a lot of similarities between last year's team and this one," Mort said. "We've got a lot of talented players on this team who want to work and want to get better."

"Now, it's just up to us as the older guys to make sure that everyone is on the same page and is playing good, hard-nosed Nebraska baseball."

That style has helped Nebraska to three College World Series appearances, four Big 12 Tournament titles and three conference regular-season titles since 1999. The Huskers have nine NCAA Tournament bids in the past 10 years.

However, success has also had its

downside for Nebraska. Not only have expectations risen, but so has the talent level of many Cornhusker recruits. While that would seem like a good thing, Anderson's program has lost 15 players off its roster and seven recruits to pro baseball in the past two seasons.

"Especially in the last two years, we've had some unique challenges because of the professional draft," Anderson said. "It looks good on paper and it's great in terms of bragging points for our program, but at the same time, when those players are gone, we as coaches are left trying to figure out who's going to replace them."

The turnover from last season leaves sophomores Mike Neseth and Michael Mariot, junior left-hander Jordan Roualdes and senior Erik Bird as the top contenders to start on the mound. Anderson said junior Erik Anderson and freshman Kash Kalkowski will likely get looks in the closer role.

Mike Anderson said the development of the staff under second-year pitching coach Eric Newman is one of the keys to Nebraska's 2009 season.

"You look at the last two years with the kids that have been (drafted) from the program, and a lot of those kids were pitchers," Anderson said. "We've got to get those younger guys some experience and exposure to get a feel out on the mound."

Offensively, Anderson said he's obviously looking for improvement. Nebraska finished ninth in the 10-team conference last season with a team batting average of .276.

Position players returning with significant experience include Mort, outfielders DJ Belfonte and Nick Sullivan, catcher Cody Neer and shortstop Ben Kline. Anderson said there are several opportunities for newcomers to potentially crack the starting lineup, with players such as outfielder Adam Bailey, infielders Kale Kiser, Boomer Collins, Cody Asche and catcher Cory Burleson all possibilities.

Of course, fans are also buzzing about the potential of Khiry Cooper. The freshman

was a top-five draft choice by the Anaheim Angels last June but opted to come to Nebraska to play football and baseball.

"The one thing we have is some versatility within our lineup," Anderson said. "We'll play a little bit to that strength and that mix."

REVELLE HOPES TO RIDE STRONG FINISH FROM 2008

Coach Rhonda Revelle is hopeful that last year's strong finish signaled a new beginning for Nebraska's softball team.

Playing in 2008 with no seniors for the first time in the program's 34-year history, Nebraska struggled through the growing pains of a 25-28 season.

On a positive note, however, the Cornhuskers return 15 letter-winners from a squad that finished 2008 with a remarkable run that took them to the Big 12 Conference Tournament championship game. Nebraska won six of its final nine games, including a pair of wins over Top 20-ranked opponents.

"We ended the season on a high note," Revelle said. "That was really uplifting for our players, and it was also really motivational as they went into off-season training. As they've come back together as a group, they have a lot of optimism for this year."

This season, Nebraska will be led by its seven-player senior class — Revelle's largest in 17 seasons. Four Cornhusker seniors have earned All-Big 12 honors during their careers, including three-time selection Crystal Carwile. The slick-fielding first baseman is bidding to become the first player to lead Nebraska home runs and RBIs in four seasons.

Nebraska has three returning seniors in the outfield: Haley Long, Meghan Mullin and Darcy Rutherford. They have combined for 303 starts. The infield has

four returning starters as Carwile is joined by shortstop Whitney Barrett, second baseman Julie Brechtel and third baseman Heidi Foland.

Injuries forced senior Amanda Duran and sophomore Ashley Guile to share starting duties last season at catcher. While Duran is expected to start behind the plate, Guile also could battle senior Brittany Pascale for at-bats as the designated player.

There's also competition for innings in the circle. Senior Molly Hill, who has a 50-28 career record with a 2.11 ERA, returns along with junior Alex Hupp, who had a team-low 3.11 ERA in 2008.

The pitching staff is bolstered by the addition of transfer Robin Mackin, who led the WAC in wins, ERA and strikeouts in both of her seasons at Fresno State. The junior redshirted in 2008 while training with coach Lori Sippel's Canadian national team for the Beijing Olympics.

Revelle said freshman Ashley Hagemann — the 2007 and 2008 Gatorade player of the year in Nebraska — also could be a factor.

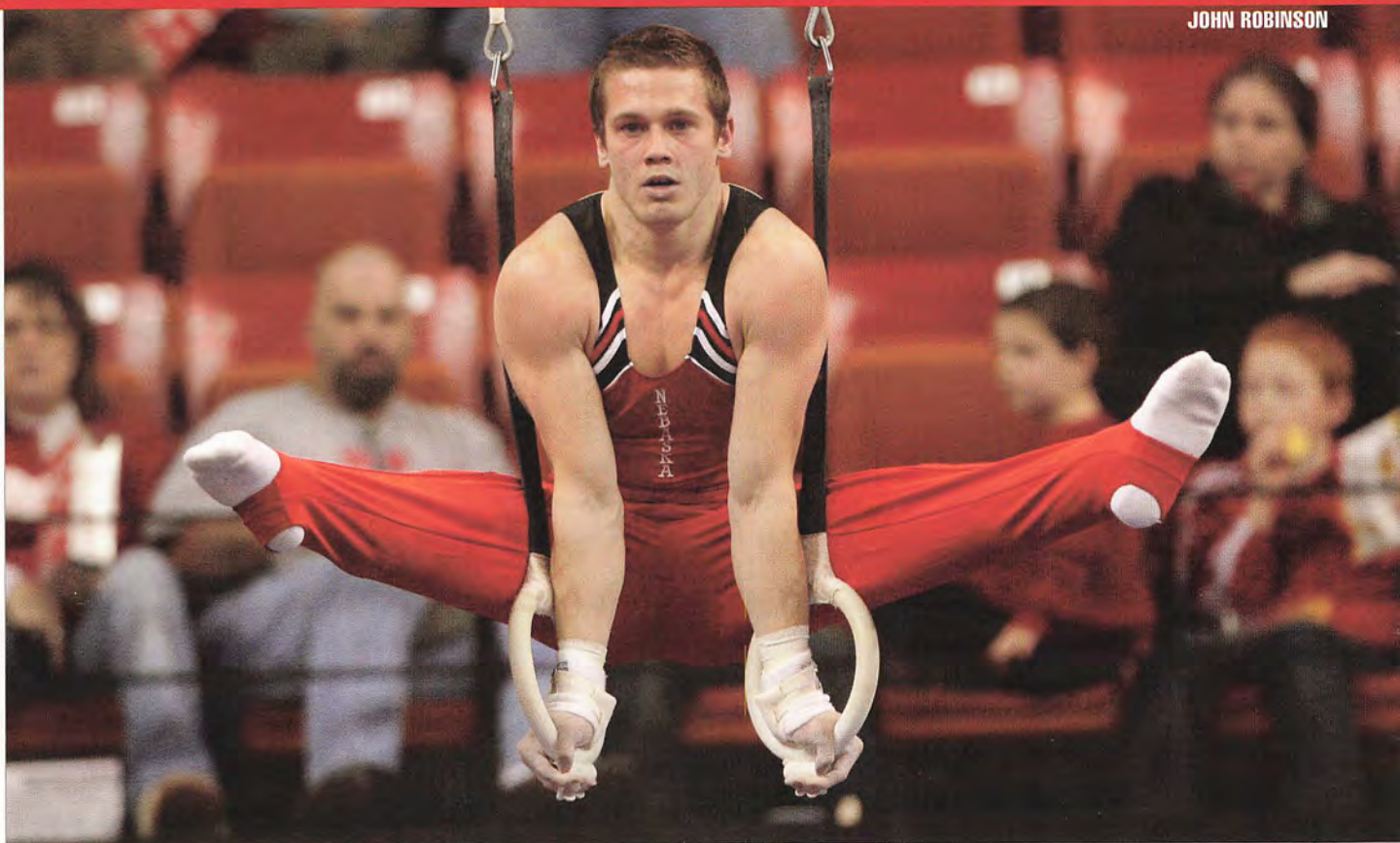
"We have added some people to the mix, so there are a few positions where every day is a battle in practice," Revelle said. "That's only going to make us stronger in the end." **N**



RONDA REVELLE

Around the Horn

JOHN ROBINSON



GYMNASTICS Broken bones don't slow Robinson

BY TOMMY DAHLK

It would be fitting for the Nebraska men's gymnastics' team to come out to the "M*A*S*H" theme song.

The injury bug has bit the Huskers hard this year, and junior **JOHN ROBINSON** is one of the only all-arounders still competing.

But even Robinson is barely staying together. In fact, he can't really remember the last time he competed pain free.

"I have broken a bone every year for the past 10 years," Robinson said. "I'm going on a record pace here. I've broken so many I can't even count them all."

He's broken a foot, fingers, his nose and ribs. This year, he has competed with a broken hand. A bone in his left hand cracked and completely broke off. It currently is floating around in his hand.

Last year, he hurt an ankle and needed off-season reconstructive surgery. Since he couldn't do any exercises on his ankle last summer, he said he thinks he put a lot of pressure on his hand and caused the break.

Robinson plans to have off-season surgery on his left hand and said he won't miss any action this year despite the fact he sometimes wants to scream when he grabs the parallel bars and pommel horse.

"I'm just going to have to bear the pain," he said. "I'm going to have to start really working hard at practice."

Robinson has tried to put a pad on his hand so he can use the weight-room equipment, but said it is pretty tough to grab on using one.

Even though it hurts, Robinson is glad he isn't missing any time because he loves his newfound role as the Huskers' all-around leader. He finished third in



the all-around portion last month against Oklahoma even though the injury prevented him from practicing in a few events before the meet.

Head coach **FRANCIS ALLEN** said Robinson has made great strides and has cleaned up his form. He also stressed how important it is that Robinson has continued to compete as an all-arounder.

"What happens is, the team kind of feeds around the all-around guy," Allen said. "When he does a good job, it seems like everybody does well, and he's like my quarterback."

Robinson said he hopes he can continue to improve and likes competing in the all-around segment, though his left hand would indicate otherwise.

"I'm not necessarily the best guy in any event, but I like to do what I can," Robinson said. "It's exciting, that's for sure. When you're done with one event, you know you have so many more opportunities to help out." **N**

MEN'S GYMNASTICS SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent, Time/Results
Sat, Jan 10	at Rocky Mt. Open, 2nd, 332.400 at Colorado Springs, Colo.
Sun, Jan 18	Oklahoma, 337.600 - 354.300 (L)
Sat, Jan 24	at Stanford Open, 3rd-334.700
Feb 5-7	at Winter Cup Las Vegas, Nev.
Sat, Feb 14	at Iowa, vs. Minnesota, 7 p.m.
Sat, Feb 28	at Oklahoma, TBA
Sun, Mar 15	Minnesota, Arizona State, 2 p.m.
Fri, Mar 20	at Illinois-Chicago, 7 p.m.
Sat, Apr 4	MPSF Championship, TBA
Apr 16-18	at NCAA Championships at Minneapolis, Minn.

HUSKER QUICK HITS



BIG 12 WEEKLY HONORS

Two Nebraska athletes earned conference recognition in late January. Redshirted freshman heavyweight Tucker Lane was named the Big 12 Wrestler of the Week after helping the Huskers to a fourth-place finish at the NWCA National Duals in Cedar Falls, Iowa, while sophomore pole vaulter Natalie Willer was named the Big 12 Track & Field Female Athlete of the Week. Both shared the awards, Lane with Iowa State's Jake Varner, Willer with Destiny Hooker of Texas.

Willer earned the award after winning the pole vault with an indoor school-record effort of 13-9¼ at the Holiday Inn Invitational. Willer also had cleared 13-9¼ outdoors.

The previous record was 13-9¼, held by Jenny Green.

Lane, who is from Redvale, Colo., was 3-1 in National Dual competition and was the highest ranked freshman heavyweight in the nation at the time.

NEW FACES

The Husker track and field teams added three athletes for the indoor season, which began in mid-January. Lorena Menghia, the 2008 Ohio Valley Conference outdoor champion in the high jump from Isai, Romania, transferred to Nebraska after one season at Jacksonville (Ala.) State, while Bjorn Barrefors and Nandi Meyer both enrolled as freshmen.

Barrefors, who competes in the indoor heptathlon and outdoor decathlon, is from Vastergotland, Sweden, while Meyer is a middle distance runner from Kempton Park,

Guateng, South Africa.

Menghia and Meyer strengthen a women's recruiting class that was ranked 10th nationally by Track and Field News.

CHAMPIONSHIPS APPROACHING

Both the Big 12 Indoor Track and Field Championships and the NCAA Indoor Championships are scheduled for College Station, Texas, Feb. 27-28 and March 13-14, respectively.

The Big 12 Wrestling Championships are slated for the NU Coliseum on March 7, followed by the NCAA Championships at St. Louis, March 19-21.

The NCAA Rifle Championships will be held in Fort Worth, Texas, March 13-15.

SECOND-SEMESTER ENROLLEES

Volleyball recruits Hannah Werth and Megan Pendergast enrolled for classes in January and are participating in the Huskers' off-season program. Both are freshmen.

Werth is a 6-foot-1 outside hitter from Springfield, Ill., where she set a state record for kills at Glenwood High School. She was credited with 2,022 during four seasons.

Pendergast is a 5-7 libero from League City, Texas.

The other recruits in Nebraska's 2009 class were both from in the state, 6-1 outside hitter Gina Mancuso from Omaha (Papillion-LaVista High School) and 6-3 middle blocker Hayley Thrasher from Ewing. Mancuso is the younger sister of former Husker Dani Mancuso, a starter on the Huskers' NCAA championship team in 2006.

All four were rated among the top 70 in the nation.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The Husker volleyball team has received an oral commitment from Morgan Broekhuis, a 6-5 setter from Colorado Springs, Colo., for its 2010 recruiting class, according to the Lincoln Journal Star. Broekhuis, a junior at Colorado Springs Christian School, was the state's Gatorade Player of the Year, leading her team to the school's fifth consecutive state championship.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

UNSUNG HERO - **BILL BRONSON** wasn't the star player on coach **ERNEST BEARG**'s 1927 Nebraska team. Running back **GLENN PRESNELL** was, earning All-America recognition. Bronson wasn't even a starter.

The senior from Lincoln, Neb., was a quarterback, backing up captain John "Jug" Brown. But when Brown was injured, Bronson stepped in, as was the case for the Syracuse game. Brown had suffered an injury three weeks earlier, in a 7-6 loss at conference rival Missouri, and though he had played some the next week in a 58-0 victory against Grinnell, Bronson had taken over. Despite an off-week before the Syracuse game, Brown was still ailing. So Bronson started.

The Syracuse game drew national attention as an intersectional match-up. And the Dad's Day crowd, estimated at 24,000 to 25,000 was as large as any at still-new Memorial Stadium with the notable exception of the Notre Dame game on Thanksgiving Day in 1925 - 45,000.

Nebraska defeated Syracuse handily, taking charge with two first-quarter Presnell touchdowns on the way to a 21-0 victory. But Bronson drew the attention of referee Leslie Edmonds, who wrote in a newspaper column afterward: "The stands didn't shout his name as often, the radio didn't concern itself with his work so much, the summary only carries his name when he went out and came in but it was Bronson whose generally unerring sense of play direction and field strategy made possible that tremendous out-pouring of power that was the Huskers' in the first period. His intelligent use of a gridiron force of as high wattage as there was in America last Saturday was a performance that should be and hereby is commended."



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNL ARCHIVES



Tom Osborne: "We're definitely glad to get it over with. I wasn't scared we would play like we did at Iowa State - we learned a lesson there - but considering the different conditions and atmosphere, we came out OK."

Barely 6 minutes into the second quarter of the Coca Cola Bowl, Nebraska led 21-0 and was well on the way to winning its first outright Big Eight championship since 1988 and a trip to the Orange Bowl to play third-ranked Florida State, under the direction of freshman quarterback **TOMMIE FRAZIER** - who stood 182.9 centimeters tall and weighed 86.2 kilograms, according to the game program. Frazier would be named the game's MVP, while teammate **TRAVIS HILL**, an outside linebacker, would be named the game's most outstanding defensive player. Hill was credited with 10 tackles, including one of the Cornhuskers' five sacks. With

GAMES REMEMBERED

Dec. 6, 1992 at Tokyo

Nebraska 38, Kansas State 24

Nebraska	14	7	10	7	-	38
Kansas State	0	10	0	14	-	24

(N) Corey Dixon 18 pass Tommie Frazier (Byron Bennett kick)
 (N) Frazier 19 run (Bennett kick)
 (N) Frazier 4 run (Bennett kick)
 (KS) Andre Coleman 10 pass Matt Garber (Tate Wright kick)
 (KS) Wright 40 field goal
 (N) Bennett 42 field goal
 (N) Calvin Jones 38 run (Bennett kick)
 (KS) Garber 8 run (Wright kick)
 (N) Frazier 1 run (Bennett kick)
 (KS) Brad Seib 21 pass Garber (Wright kick)

Attendance: 50,000 (est.)

fellow "we-back" **DEREK BROWN** sidelined by a shoulder separation suffered in a 33-9 victory at Oklahoma the previous week, **CALVIN JONES**, the Big Eight Offensive Player of the Year, carried 30 times for 186 yards and one touchdown.

Did you know: Because of a 15-hour time difference, kickoff was 1 p.m. on Sunday in Tokyo and 10 p.m. on Saturday (Dec. 5) in Lincoln. The game was originally scheduled for Manhattan, Kan., on Oct. 17. Cornhusker linebackers coach **MIKE EKELER** was a sophomore at Kansas State, a strong safety and special teams player; his name was misspelled ("Ekaler") in the game program. Temperature in the Tokyo Dome was 70 degrees, with a relative humidity of more than 50 percent, prompting Nebraska trainer **GEORGE SULLIVAN** to request fans for the bench area, but no fans were provided. Each

team was guaranteed \$200,000. The cost of passports for Nebraska was \$9,000. The teams were on the same flight from Kansas City to Vancouver to Tokyo, a 13-hour trip. A quarterpounder at McDonald's in Tokyo cost 800 yen, about \$6.40. Ticket prices were \$60 to \$90. Estimates of the number of Nebraska fans who made the trip to Japan ranged from 250 to 600.

In the news: The Associated Press reported that General Motors had announced it would be downsizing after losses of \$3 billion. President George H.W. Bush ordered troops to Somalia, which was ravaged by famine, in a humanitarian effort. President-elect Bill Clinton asked Maya Angelou to read a poem at his inauguration. The Boston Celtics were adjusting to NBA life without Larry Bird, who had retired after the 1991-92 season.

CROSSWORD & TRIVIA

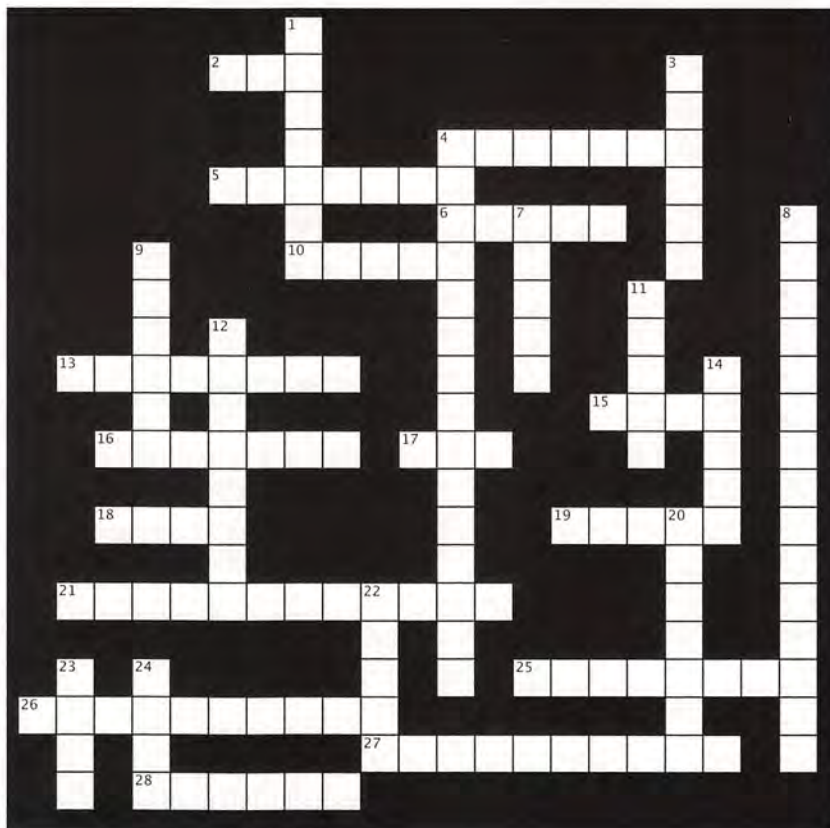
ACROSS

2. Leading tackler in 2008
4. 1994 Outland Trophy winner
5. Assistant head coach
6. Quarterback who redshirted in 2008
10. Leading receiver in 2008
13. Coach before Devaney
15. Tight end in 2009 recruiting class
16. Second-generation Husker in 2009 recruiting class
17. Quarterback who played in 2 games in 2008
18. Leading rusher in 2008
19. Ex-Husker in Super Bowl XLIII
21. 2009 non-conference road opponent
25. April 25-26 event
26. State with 6 athletes in 2009 recruiting class
27. April 18 event
28. 1997 Outland Trophy winner

DOWN

1. 1992 Outland Trophy winner
3. Associate head coach
4. Opponent in 2010 opener
7. NU's 2003 bowl game
8. Opponent in 2009 opener
9. Kansas junior college recruit in 2009 class
11. California junior college recruit in 2009 class
12. Opponent in 2009 Big 12 opener
14. Quarterback in 2009 recruiting class
20. 1997 Lombardi Award winner
22. State with 8 athletes in 2009 recruiting class
23. Bo's older brother
24. Quarterback who played in 5 games in 2008

Answers will appear in the April issue



HUSKERNUTZ



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FEBRUARY CROSSWORD SOLUTION





THE FINAL WORD

BY MIKE BABCOCK

Stardom comes early for Husker recruits

THEY BECOME PUBLIC figures in Nebraska before they officially become Cornhuskers, before they ever step on the practice field, much less play in a game.

ERIC MARTIN was flying home to Moreno Valley, Calif., from a recruiting visit to Nebraska when someone noticed his name tag. In short order, he was signing an autograph for the fellow traveler, who already considered him a Blackshirt. He had a captive audience for the remainder of the flight.

Martin recounted the encounter recently, on the *Huskers Illustrated* Radio Show.

CHRIS WILLIAMS, like Martin a linebacker, recalled being recognized by a stranger walking on campus during his recruiting visit, as well as being encouraged by fans to throw the bones at last year's Missouri game, five months before signing a letter of intent. Fans at the game knew his name.

Such instant celebrity status conferred on Cornhuskers-to-be can be magnified by position, in particular one as high-profile as quarterback. Even if you don't follow recruiting closely but consider yourself a Cornhusker fan, you probably know a little something about **CODY GREEN**.

You might not have remembered that wide receiver **ANTONIO BELL** was also listed among the 2008 recruits. You might not have known that **TAYLOR MARTINEZ**, who's listed as an athlete, would like at least a shot at quarterback, or that **COLE PENSICK** will begin his career on defense, like his dad. But you know about Green, who is already enrolled in classes and will participate in spring practice.

Green is the third Cornhusker quarterback recruit in as many years to enroll early, following **PATRICK WITT** (2007) and **KODY**

SPANIO (2008), both of whom, like Green, came from Texas high schools — though Witt grew up and went to school in Georgia until his senior year.

Though hardly anonymous, Witt and Spano drew less attention than Green, mainly because the order of succession at quarterback was, for all intents and purposes, clear-cut.

That's not the case now. Witt took a few snaps in five games last season. But the competition to replace **JOE GANZ** will be wide-open this spring, with Green getting a shot. His numbers as a high school senior in Dayton, Texas, would indicate he'll be a good fit in Nebraska's offensive system, which benefitted from Ganz's ability as a runner. But he has lot to learn, in a short time.

Asked about Green during Nebraska's letter-of-intent-signing news conference, coach **BO PELINI**'s answer was predictably short: "He's just competing like everybody else."

Pelini doesn't talk about individual recruits and once the athletes are on campus, reporters aren't allowed to interview them until they play.

Pelini did talk about Green at the end of the news conference at which **NDAMUKONG SUH** announced he was returning for his senior season rather than declaring for the NFL draft, however. Pelini said that he told Green he had to keep things in "perspective," that he had to "take the same approach that I do, these coaches do, all the players do. You just go to work, just do what you're supposed to do.

"You can't worry about all the influences and fanfare and expectations, or anything like that. You just do what you're supposed to

do and work to be the best you can be, every single day."

Bell and defensive back **DEJON GOMES**, a transfer from City College of San Francisco, no doubt have been given the same encouragement as mid-year enrollees. But neither carries the burden of a four-star quarterback. "There are probably unrealistic expectations for that young man already. But he's a mature kid. He knows what he wants, and that's why he's already here," Pelini said of Green.

"I try and tell everybody, every kid that's come into a program early, that's come mid-year, you have to understand you're going to have rougher times than if you start in August because once you start in spring ball, really winter conditioning up into spring ball, there aren't a lot of freshmen to put them on the field against. You're breaking in against kids that are more mature, have been around it, have been through the system. So that's a harder situation to break into."

The transition from high school to college, and a long way from home at that, adds to the difficulty. Some have "started doubting themselves after a couple of days, so you've got to prepare them for that and prepare them for, 'Hey, Rome, it wasn't built in a day. It takes time,'" said Pelini.

Green has begun the process of fitting in. At halftime of the Nebraska basketball team's upset of Texas at the Devaney Sports Center, he joined his new teammates in throwing mini basketballs into the crowd. Fans knew which one he was, even though he's never taken a snap.

He's got a strong arm, no question about that. **N**

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